

“STANDING AROUND”
Acts 1:1-11 and Acts 2:1-13
May 20, 2018 – Pentecost
Holiday Island Presbyterian Church

I’m going to read only portions of Acts 1:1-11 and Acts 2:1-13

³After his suffering, [Jesus] presented himself to [the disciples] and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with^[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit.”

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

2 When the day of Pentecost came, [the Disciples] were all together in one place.² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? . . . we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

INTRODUCTION:

Most scholars think – and I agree – that Luke is the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Primarily because both are addressed to "Theophilus."

All we know about Theophilus is that he had a Greek name and Luke was intent on telling him about Christianity.

The Gospel of Luke tells him all about Jesus – the Book of Acts tells him the impact

that Jesus had on His followers

and the spread of that Good News.

So, the Book of Acts begins shortly after the Crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS:

Sometime after the resurrection,

and after Jesus had been teaching the disciples about the Kingdom of God,

the time came for Jesus to ascend into heaven.

Basically, about the time the disciples became convinced that Jesus had indeed been resurrected,

Jesus took His leave from them.

In so doing, Jesus left them with some final instructions.

They were to remain in Jerusalem until -

“. . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

As they were watching the Ascension,

**two men – most likely angels – appeared to them
and basically said – in an East Texas accent –
“Why y’all standin’ around?
Y’all got some work to do.”**

**So, the disciples continued to stay in Jerusalem
and continued meeting together to ponder
the meaning of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.**

It was a period of waiting and preparation.

**Have you ever wondered how many times in the life of the Church –
- both the Church Universal and this particular church –
- there has been a time of waiting and preparation?**

**Outwardly, it may seem as though there is not much going on.
We live in a society that values setting and achieving goals.
We thrive on “to-do” lists.**

I keep one in my phone.

**And I have been known to add something to the list
that I have just completed
just so I can check it off and feel good
about accomplishing something.**

**What may *seem* like waiting
may actually be a period of preparation.
A period when we should “Be still and know God.”**

BECOMING EQUIPPED:

**We have no way of knowing what went on
in the lives of the disciples
between Jesus' Ascension and the Day of Pentecost.**

**My best guess is the disciples were being *equipped*
for what was about to happen.**

**As the Day of Pentecost approaches,
people are getting ready to celebrate
what has become the day the Law was given to Moses.**

For the disciples, it will be more than they could ever expect.

**So, they are gathered and most likely discussing Jesus,
what they remembered about His teachings,
and waiting – not sure what for,
but obediently waiting.**

**There is a proverb, Proverbs 27:17 that says:
"as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."**

**I think the disciples – in their discussion of all that had happened –
- were honing their belief,
unifying their understanding of their experiences.**

**They are about to be unleashed on the world –
- to "be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

**They are being equipped to spread the gospel.
Their understanding is being honed by discussions
and their theology is meshing into a unified testimony.**

There is a huge amount of spiritual work going on

in preparation of what is to come.

The term “backdraft” comes to mind.

**A “backdraft” happens when a fire builds up faster
than the amount of oxygen available to feed the fire.**

**A window is broken or a door is opened
and oxygen is re-introduced to the fire
and there is a dramatic event – a sudden flare up.**

**The flames suddenly retreat,
gather explosive energy
and burst forth in a mighty wave of fire.**

**The disciples have “retreated” as instructed,
they are waiting fresh spiritual energy
and it will be a very dramatic event.**

**All the spiritual energy is gathering
both externally in heaven
and internally in the disciples.**

THE EVENT:

And then it happened . . .

**The disciples are gathered,
discussing the meaning of Jesus,
waiting as they had been told.**

**And without any warning whatsoever,
there comes a loud howling like the sound of a tornado!**

The sound is so pervasive, it fills the entire house!

It is so loud, all conversation stops.

The Hebrew word for “wind” is *ruah*.

**It points back to the “breath of God”
that Ezekiel saw blow across the valley of dry bones
and cause those bones to rise up.**

There is a short pause . . .

**then the room is filled with something like tongues of fire –
- a fire that does not consume.**

**There is no need to stop, drop and roll
Perhaps like that of the Burning Bush?
Or the pillar of fire that led the Israelites?**

**This fire is not of this earth – the *shekinah* -
and it comes to rest on each of those gathered there.**

**The fact that it came to rest on each of the disciples
is very significant.**

**Prior to this,
the Spirit of God primarily rested upon leaders
and those called to special purposes.**

Now, the Spirit has become available to every believer!

And their lives are forever changed!

**What started out as a celebration of receiving the Torah,
has now changed to receiving the Holy Spirit.**

**What was once Torah centered and legalistic
has become Christ centered, loving, and Spirit directed.**

What once was for the nation

is now for the individual.

We often celebrate Pentecost as the birth of the Church.
That all depends on what you mean by “Church.”

If by “Church” you mean the Body of Christ –
- made up of believers –
then you would be correct.

Certainly it was not the birth of the institution
we refer to as “church.”

In reality, it is the birth of a personal relationship with God
through the Holy Spirit.

OTHER TONGUES:

I want to take just a moment to address Luke’s phrase:
“other tongues.”

There are two schools of thought on this.

The first is that the disciples were speaking in *unknown* tongues.
Some say it was ecstatic speech;
caused by the outpouring of the Spirit.

Others say - and I must agree with them -
that the *tongues* the disciples were speaking in
were *immediately* recognized by the gathered people.

To me, it wouldn’t make sense
for Jesus to say, “. . . be my witnesses . . .”
and then have the disciples
try to witness in unknown tongues.

**I do not, in any way, discount the belief and practice
of our Pentecostal brothers and sisters.**

I merely tell you what my position is.

SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS:

**From my perspective,
the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
had at least two very important consequences.**

**First,
the “gift” of the Holy Spirit is now given to every believer.**

**In my opinion, the most important gift of the Holy Spirit
is the ability to grasp and be grasped by the Gospel –
to gain a fuller understanding of the significance of Jesus;
and to understand His teachings.**

**Whether that happens by “hearing” the Gospel preached,
or by reading the Gospel,
it is the Holy Spirit that quickens our understanding
and leads us to deeper wisdom.**

**A word, a phrase, a sentence, suddenly catches our attention,
something like a mini-Pentecost happens in our mind,
and we see things differently than before.**

**The Good Samaritan becomes more than an act of social kindness;
the Prodigal Son becomes a personal encounter.**

**And we have a flash of understanding
that is greater than what we may have thought previously.**

Secondly,

at Pentecost, the disciples were fully equipped
to be effective witnesses for Jesus and the Gospel.

These *Galileans* were not considered the Mensa group
of the Jewish world –
- far from it.

They were common folk,
what we would call “blue collar workers,”
without much formal education.

And they had a rather odd way of speaking –
- sort of like East Texans, now that I think of it.

And suddenly – or what *seems* like suddenly –
they begin to preach the Gospel with immense spiritual power
and life-changing conviction.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,
that have become *fully* equipped to be witnesses.

What I mean by *fully equipped* is
the disciples are now ready to spread the Good News
to every tribe and nation.

The Holy Spirit has swept away every barrier.
New spiritual life has been breathed into the disciples
and there is a spiritual “backdraft!”

They were now able to spread the Gospel in a manner
that would be heard and understood by people of the world.
Preached in their language,
using illustrations they would understand.

**It is by *this* power,
ushered in by the Holy Spirit
that the Gospel began to spread very quickly.**

CONCLUSION:

What if . . .

**What if this Church is being prepared spiritually
to begin spreading the Good News
in a more powerful and convincing way?**

**What if God has been quietly preparing us
for a Pentecostal event of our own?**

**What if God, through the Holy Spirit,
has been preparing us to go into our neighborhoods
and preach the Good News to the lost?**

**What if God, through the Holy Spirit,
has been preparing folks to hear the Good News
we have to offer them?**

Wouldn't you want to be a part of that?

THAT should be the prayer of everyone in this Church!

PRAYER:

**Loving God and Fiery Spirit, ignite the fires of Pentecost in
each of us. Give us opportunities to share Your Good News. Unleash
us. Send us forth to be Your witnesses. Amen.**

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