

May 31, 2020  
Day of Pentecost  
Acts 2:1-21

I'm never sure quite what to talk about on Pentecost. Should it be the mighty rushing wind, or tongues of fire which were manifestations of the Holy Spirit? Should it be the disciples praying in languages thus far unknown to them by the gift of the Holy Spirit? Should it be the confusion and debate among the observers. Should I speak of the fulfilling of Joel's prophecy or Peter's effective sermon.

Those are the important parts of the Day of Pentecost.

But I couldn't help somewhat tongue in cheek putting that very first verse on the cover of our bulletin this morning:

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

Isn't it good to be together again?

Together in this place? Even with masks or hand sanitizer or no hugging or whatever modification we are making isn't it good to be together in this place?

I have missed it and I know many of you have too.

I have worshipped in many churches. Big, small, different denominations, different countries different languages... In cities over ten million and in remote farmland with no electricity.

I've been in trendy churches with all the newest and greatest, and churches nearly closed with just a few senior citizens on some country road.

With churches so different there is only one thing that binds it all together. The Holy Spirit.

Pentecost was about connecting very different people and forming them into one body of Christ.

Our remote worship has been good... I'm glad we had the capability to continue to share in the Word of God but it's hard being the body of Christ without being all together in one place from time to time.

The question of those witnessing the day of Pentecost was a simple question: What does this mean?

Peter's answer to them was it means we are in the last days.

That's something the church tends to forget sometimes, when life gets a little too comfortable. You see we are still walking in the last days.... Nothing has changed between 30 AD and 2020 AD, a lot of history has gone by but we are still living in these last days.

Which means we should not be surprised when things go a little haywire, and also this is why we need the Holy Spirit... to guide, to comfort, to remind us of all that Jesus commanded us, and to teach us as a church to bring glory to Jesus.

You see the last days do have some scary things from time to time... *wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.*

I don't know about vapor of smoke, but I have seen empty shelves at the grocery store and that is a little jarring. Nothing serious mind you, if it has been out of this then there was still a little of that. But I grew up with the idea that in mighty America there was always food on the supermarket shelf and it was in those other failing countries that you had to stand in line for bread. I grew up hearing about food rations in places like the Soviet Union and now everywhere I turn at Meijer I see a sign that says limit 2 per customer.

More recently the civil unrest and rioting over racial injustice seems to be tearing at the very fabric of this nation... no one ever said that these last days would all be easy.

*The sun shall be turned to darkness.*

Good times turn dark... this has happened many a time throughout history. Plague, famine, war, tribalism... we've been fortunate for a good stretch, perhaps now we will taste some bitter herbs.... But all of this, it just simply comes with the territory of living in the last days... The one thing, the only thing that truly matters is this:

*And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Saved from sin, saved from death, saved from disease, both acute and chronic, whether pandemic or rare disorder affecting only a handful of people in the whole world... When it says the Lord shall save it means that's true for each and every person who calls on the name.

So, this is what we do in church, together in one place... we call on the name. The name above all names. We call upon Jesus to save us and he does. We pray and sing in English while in other churches across this nation prayers and singing are ringing out in Spanish, or in Chinese, or in French among the African immigrant communities or in Korean or in ancient languages of the orthodox faith such as the Coptic church out of Egypt.

As we reopen for worship today so does Mother of God Chaldean Catholic church in Southfield, Michigan. Their 8:30 mass is in Arabic, their 10:30 mass is in English and their 12:30 mass is in Chaldean. This church is made up of Iraqi immigrants and their Catholic faith goes back to the very early days of Christianity.

What binds us to those brothers and sisters is not culture or denomination or language but it is the Holy Spirit. If only we could see what God sees each Sunday as churches in every nation and every tribe and language offer their praises each Sunday, the miracle of Pentecost has never ended.

So here we are together in one place again and finally able to lift up Jesus' name in one accord.

To God be all honor and power and glory this day and forever more. Amen.