

"Come, Holy Spirit Come"
Pentecost Sunday
May 20, 2018

John 15:26 - 16:15

²⁶"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

16^{4b} "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts.

⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. ¹²"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

So far today our celebration has been really great! On day like today it is so good to be a part of an exciting worshiping community like this church. We don't promise **never** a dull moment, but most of the time it seems to be that way.

It is our hope that in the midst of all this there is a message and the message is that God has sent to us a Holy Spirit to enliven us, to give us power to be the church, to enable us to dream dreams and see visions. But the Holy Spirit coming also is meant to shake things up. We like to be in control – but the two primary symbols of the day – wind and fire – can surely be uncontrollable. There's little doubt that's what Luke has in mind in his description of the day of Pentecost in Acts.

While we talk in reasonable terms about the Holy Spirit enabling us to be and do what we are do because of the presence a kind of power that was new on that day 50 days after Easter, we know that we can't control that power. It's the Spirit that gives direction and challenges at the same time. Without the spirit we are lost to our own devices with no direction or purpose for our living. Without the spirit we would be constantly bewildered by the world around us and indeed would be hopeless in the face of the world's adversity. Without the spirit there would be no consoling us in our times of suffering, sadness and loss. Without the spirit there would be no intellect and intelligence with which we are able to do both magnificent and insignificant acts. Without the spirit there would be no art, no music, no drama, no abundance to go along with our living. When we don't know how to pray, the spirit prays for us. The spirit intercedes for us, with sighs too deep for words. Do we understand that without the spirit, there is no life, because the spirit is the pneuma, the breath of God in us? It is the Spirit that fuels us and fires us up to live.

The message of Pentecost is that the Holy Spirit, imparted by God on this day we celebrate, is a force unlike any other, it is a source of power beyond our ability to understand, it is an energy both uncontainable and uncontrollable in our

lives and in the world, it can be for us the solution to our lack of zeal for living, our lack of vigor for life.

Look at what that spirit did for the disciples. When last we saw the disciples they were standing with their neck muscles cramping as they searched the sky for a last glimpse of Jesus who, with what was probably a snicker, because he knew, had told them to go and wait for the Spirit.

Always before it seems that the disciples had been the ones who would watch and wait for Jesus to do something, for God to do something. But with the coming of Pentecost, on that 50 days after Easter things changed drastically. The disciples, filled with the spirit, began to be powerful instruments of God's plan in the world. Look at what happened on the Day of Pentecost. In some rich symbolism Luke describes something happening that we new. This bunch of people who had been praying, but not understanding 'come, holy spirit' we are amazed, confused and consumed by what – a sound, a sound like a rushing violent wind. Most of us Floridians have heard that sound. People who live in tornado alley have heard that sound. Dessert dwellers have heard that sound. It's terrifying and when it come one thing is almost sure – everything is about to change. Then comes the fire and the job of fire is to take what is available, use it for fuel and make something happen. Again, it's terrifying. Fire is scary stuff. Then it just gets better as the wind and fire blow and burn those disciples out of that dusty room and into the streets. Then come the other tongues the bewildering phenomenon of the barrier of language being blown away and every body knowing what everybody is saying.

That's powerful stuff. So powerful that Acts tells us that on this day alone three thousand were added to the church, hence, Pentecost has become known as the birthday of the church, because like the spirit blowing life into us humans so that we live, so too the spirit blew life into the church. It's why we do Pentecost like we do. We want to feel with our red and our wind sounds and our flickering lights

and our music a little bit of the feeling of that day. We want to say, “Come, Holy Spirit, Come,” and get in on the Pentecost experience.

We want our church now to experience the coming of the Spirit that marks the beginning of THE church. We want some fruits of the Spirit, and some blazing fire and a descending dove, and some wind that blows a breath of fresh air in here.

This symbol of the descending dove, this holy spirit swooping down with its tail feathers on fire is a powerful image for us of God coming down and alighting on us, God offering us peace, but not leaving us alone. If we, on a day already filled with symbols can stand one more, it's why in the Celtic tradition instead of a dove you'd likely find a wild goose representing the Holy Spirit. There's something to be said for the Holy Spirit coming like a goose. Chasing, stirring things up, squawking, acting totally like a goose.

Because, in truth wherever the spirit is things will be stirred up. New Christians in Jerusalem soon discovered that through the power of the Spirit they were able to do things they were not able to do before. They became bold teachers, forceful speakers, workers of miracles, tellers of wonderful stories, caregivers of the poor, the destitute the hungry. . . all because of the Spirit. It's no different for us. You think we do what we do, what we're going to celebrate over there because of my leadership, or yours? It's the Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit that gives us these gifts hanging over our heads: Love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control. And when these gifts are at our disposal for us in God's kingdom then the world no longer seems quite as crazy and cruel. And we have hope, because we know that the Holy Spirit of God is the most powerful force in the world. We have no greater gift, no greater legacy to share with our graduates today, our confirmands today, than to hope for them, to pray for them the indwelling presence and power of the spirit. To be with them, to protect them, but most importantly to gift them so that they can

be useful and dedicated servants.

Right about now I could lean in and solemnly say, “Friends, it’s time for us, here at Highlands to dream some new dreams, to seek some new visions, to re-inspire-- but all we need to do is to do what we’ve done – say, “Come, Holy Spirit Come” and when the Holy Spirit of Pentecost comes – just try not to be inspired, just try not to change, just try not to get blown out of this room, just try not to be at least a little bit singed. We can’t do it. We can’t contain the HS>

This, my friends, is how the Holy Spirit works—like a wild goose. The Holy Spirit will come in, set up shop, and CHANGE us and our behaviors both as individual disciples and as church. The Spirit will chase us down, bring us in line, and redirect our paths. Yes, the Spirit is the gift that keeps on giving from the moment we are named and claimed in baptism until we die to this world and rise to eternal life.

So, when we blithely intone, “Come, Holy Spirit!” in our worship and in our life, do we really know what we are calling for? Do we even partially comprehend what the Spirit may do to and through and in spite of us? I wonder.

Enough said, the spirit hovers above us, it surrounds us, it is in us: hear the rush of the mighty wind, feel the flames of life burning with in and live. . . and give!