

Order of Worship
Pentecost Sunday
May 31, 2020

(Read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud.)

Prepare for worship- Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments.

Call to Worship: *Spirit of the Living God (UMH-393)*
Spirit of the living God, fall a-fresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall a-fresh on me.
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall a-fresh on me.

Centering Words:

There is no fear the Holy Spirit cannot overcome. There is no door the Spirit of grace cannot breach. This is good news indeed.

Opening Prayer:

Spirit of Pentecost, blow open the doors of our shut up hearts. Set our tongues free to proclaim your praise. Bless our youth with visions, and our elders with dreams. Bestow our children with gifts of prophecy, and renew the faith of your people throughout the world. Blow into our lives, once more, Holy One, and help us find the strength and courage to become the people you call us to be. Amen

Affirmation of Faith: Apostles' Creed

Prayer:

Spirit of the living God, fall upon us this day. In these times when we are unable to come together in body, let us know that we are connected through the power of your Spirit. Let us know that we are connected as the Body of Christ in our congregation and with followers of Jesus throughout the world. We know that your Spirit which connects us is greater than any power that separates us. May your Spirit give us wisdom during this time that we may protect ourselves and others from this virus which plagues your creation. We pray in the name of Christ who heals us and taught us to pray.

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word
O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Epistle Reading 1 Corinthians 12: 3b-13

Psalm 104: 24-35

Gospel Reading John 7: 37-39

Special Music

New Testament Reading Acts 2: 1-21

Sermon What the Father Promised

Hymn *Where the Spirit of the Lord Is (TFWS- 2119)*

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is peace;
where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is love.
There is comfort in life's darkest hour;
there is light and life;
there is help and power in the Spirit,
in the Spirit of the Lord.

Benediction:

Go forth with the presence of the ascended Christ who though ascended remains with us.
Amen

Response *God Be With You till We Meet Again*

God be with you till we meet again;
by his counsels guide, uphold you,
with his sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.

The Promise of the Father
5/31/2020

Acts 2: 1-21

Pentecost Sunday

Jesus has ascended. He is gone. He is no longer with the disciples who had followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem. The disciples follow the instructions he had given them. They stay in Jerusalem and wait. They gather in one place and wait. They wait for the promise of the Father. What was this promise? None of them knew. They just waited for whatever would happen.

Then on the day of Pentecost, the Jewish festival celebrating the wheat harvest, there came into the house a sound, like the rush of a violent wind. WHOOOOSH! Tongues that seemed to be of fire appeared and rested on each one of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

This was the promise of the Father that Jesus told them to wait for. This was the promise of the continuing presence of God the Father and God the Son, entering into and abiding with the disciples. It was the very power of God which gave them the ability to break down human barriers and draw all people to God.

We see this in this story of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit as it fills each of the disciples gives each one the ability to speak in a different language. As the crowds of pilgrims that were in Jerusalem for the festival heard the noise and came to see, they heard these men from Galilee, speaking in their own language. They heard what the disciples were saying in their own language. There were people from at least 15 different countries speaking at least 15 different languages or dialects, and yet they heard in their own language. The barrier of language was broken by both the speaker and the hearer. The disciples spoke in a different language and the people heard in their own language.

Peter, dear impulsive Peter who denied even knowing Jesus, then stands and addresses the people explaining what is happening. This gift of the Father is not just for the disciples but "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." God is pouring out the Holy Spirit upon all people. And all people will receive the gift of the Spirit.

The Spirit of God is given to all people. Not just to those disciples gathered in that house that Pentecost Day, but to all people. Through the Spirit the community which we now call the church was built. Through the Spirit all who repent and call

on the name of the Lord are not just saved, but come together as a community ruled by God's rule of love.

Through the Spirit we are all connected. We are not connected because we come together in this building on Mohawk Drive (or Gunter Circle) at 11:00 Sunday mornings. We are connected because the Spirit of the Lord abides within us. We are connected through the Spirit even though we cannot meet together in this building at this time. Even though only a very few of us are in this building in body this morning we are connected. Some of you may be reading these words in your own home as I speak. Some of you may be participating by watching this online at a different time. But wherever and whenever we are worshipping, we are in community together. Even as I look out, as I speak to seemingly empty pews, I see each one of you as we are connected through the Spirit.

But the Spirit does more than simply connect into community, it gives power. It gives power to sons and daughters to prophesy, to proclaim what God is doing to redeem creation. It gives power for young and old to see visions and dream dreams, to look ahead to what can be and to perceive what God wants. It gives power regardless of social status, even to slaves, and gender so that all will proclaim God's redemptive acts.

The Spirit gives us power to be God's community. To be a community ruled by God's rule to love. To build a nation and world ruled by love and inclusiveness rather than hatred and division. The Spirit is poured out upon us to participate in God's redemptive plan for all creation. This is what we are saved for.

But wait a minute. If God's Spirit has been poured out upon all people and all people are given the power to enter into community with all people why is there so much hatred and division in the world? *Why aren't we all sitting around the global campfire singing Kum Ba Ya or We Are One in the Spirit?*

Perhaps it is that we too often are like the character in Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*. It begins by the main character (unnamed) saying that he does not like Sam I Am. (interesting that I Am is the name of God as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3). Sam I Am offers green eggs and ham but the character refuses. Sam I Am offers green eggs and ham in many different places and situations with different "people". But the character refuses. He does not like green eggs and ham.

Perhaps it is that we do not think that we will like what God is saving us for. We like what he is saving us from, sin and death, but saving us for breaking down barriers and building a community, nation and world? Not so sure. We like our dogmas, our perceptions of right, which is what we see as right. We like our concept of sin and sinners and who is going to heaven or hell. And it is fine to have a community of people like us, but including those people? I don't know.

Our passage from Acts ends at verse 21, "Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now these are not Peter's words. He is quoting from the prophet Joel so the meaning of "calling on the name of the Lord" is in the Old Testament sense of the phrase. The Lord is not Jesus but the triune God. I cringe every time I see the bumper sticker that says I believe in God and Jesus is his name. It is when we call upon God that we are saved.

Now, calling on the name is not just confession and repentance- God I call upon you to save me from my sin- but calling upon the name is to identify the one to whom you are calling upon as your sovereign, your king, your ruler. So, when you truly call upon the name of God you are saying God save me from sin and save me for what you want me to be.

What God wants me to be may be like green eggs and ham. We may not think that we will like what God wants us to be. It means changing and transforming our lives, our attitudes, our very being so we are not centered around what we want or what others think of us, but aligned with what God wants us to be. We may resist here. We may resist there. We may resist in a box (maybe because we don't want to get out of our box) or with a fox. We may resist because green eggs and ham, what God wants us to be, may not be appealing at first sight.

But at the end of *Green Eggs and Ham* the character relents and finally tastes green eggs and ham. When he does, he realizes that he likes green eggs and ham.

God has been pouring out his Holy Spirit upon us and is pouring out his Holy Spirit upon us now. But perhaps we have been holding our heads down as the Spirit is poured upon us. Letting the Spirit fall over our heads and our backs, flowing off of us as we only accept what God has saved us from. Seeing only what is right around us.

But what if we lift our heads so the Spirit pours over our face. What if we open our mouths wide so the Spirit flows into us, filling us with God's love, filling us with God's power. Filling us with God's power to fully participate in God's redeeming of the world. Filling us with God's power to see visions and dream dreams of how we and our church can be as we look up and out into the future and not just at what is right now. Filling us with God's power so that we can proclaim the saving acts of God to West Columbia, South Carolina, the US and to the world! Filling us with the power to connect with all people at all times, not limited by place and time, connected perhaps in different ways than just coming together in one place at one time. Filling us with the power to be a community ruled by love, God's love for us and love for all neighbors.

Let us be filled with the Holy Spirit which is God's promise so that we can proclaim God's word of salvation to all people; breaking down all barriers not limited by walls and buildings to be the community and people God wants us to be, doing what God wants us to do so that the great and glorious day of the Lord will come.

Fill us Lord with your abiding Spirit, with your power, with your peace and with your love. Amen