**May 28, 2023 Acts 2:1-4, 36-47**

***Pentecost and Baptism***

**Scripture:** *Acts 2:1-4, 36-47 NRSV*

*(1)When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. (2)And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. (3)Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. (4)All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. … (36)Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." (37)Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" (38)Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (39)For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." (40)And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." (41)So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. (42)They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (43)Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. (44)All who believed were together and had all things in common; (45)they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. (46)Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, (47)praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

**Notes:**

1. Jesus told the disciples to ***wait*** in Jerusalem;
   1. ***Pentecost*** began with the Holy Spirit.
   2. The ***resurrection*** of Jesus turned the disciples around.
   3. The Spirit of God showed up in ***power***,
   4. Their joy ***spread*** from one to another that day,
2. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was ***huge***.
   1. Peter was filled with a new ***boldness***.
   2. Peter, ***reminded*** them of a prophecy in the book of Joel
   3. A great number of new believers were ***baptized***.
3. ***Symbols*** impact the life of a Christ-follower.
   1. The first symbol is the ***grace*** of God.
   2. The Second symbol is a symbol of ***dying***.
   3. The third symbol is a symbol of having ***died***.
   4. The fourth is the symbol of ***resurrection***.

**Scripture:**

Today’s Scriptures speak of birth; of new life; of spiritual belonging; and of supernatural events that brought about the beginning of the church. These passages speak of baptism, which of course today we gather to celebrate. I am thrilled to share in the baptism of these individuals that will be coming forward today.

We gather today to celebrate the Pentecost as other Christians of all types around the world remember and celebrate this day. This day commemorates the fulfillment of a promise by Jesus, the promise that when he left planet earth He would send a comforter, a counselor.

Jesus had told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem; to wait for power to come upon them from on high. Pentecost Sunday is the celebration of the birthday of the church. It began with the Holy Spirit, who came upon the followers of Jesus with power.

His followers had gathered together in great expectancy. They had good reason to be excited. They had been through the dark, dark day of Jesus’ crucifixion. All their hopes and dreams had been squashed.

A few days later, Jesus rose from the dead and showed Himself to the disciples and then a great many others. The resurrection of Jesus turned the disciples around. It altered history; changed everything, really. And just before Jesus ascended to the Father, He had told them to hang out in the Holy City. Stand with me as we share in this passage from Acts 2:1-4 and 36-47.

*Acts 2:1-47 NRSV (1) When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. (2) And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. (3) Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. (4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. … (36) Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." (37) Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" (38) Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (39) For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." (40) And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." (41) So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. (42) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (43) Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. (44) All who believed were together and had all things in common; (45) they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. (46) Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

So there they are, waiting, hoping for some sign from God, anticipating that God would do something, something big. Something big enough to enable the Apostles and the early followers of Jesus to do what Jesus commanded them to do.

Jesus had said: “…Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

That was a big command, quite beyond their ability to do in nature. These were, none of them, particularly impressive folks.

The Apostle Paul says in *1 Corinthians 1:26-29 NRSV (26) Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; (28) God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, (29) so that no one might boast in the presence of God.*

And as they were together, the Spirit of God showed up in power, filling each of them so much that they couldn’t contain their joy. Their joy spread from one to another that day, and since that day the joy of knowing Jesus and the revolutionary new way of living that Jesus began has not stopped spreading.

Sometimes it’s spread like wildfire, sometimes in slow motion, as if from candle to candle. It has always spread person to person, as each Christ-follower has lived the Way of Jesus and demonstrated the radically different values of the Kingdom of God in the here and now.

So the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was huge. That’s why 2000 years later we still celebrate it. And something else happened that day that we heard just a little bit about in our reading. Peter, having been restored by Jesus after he denied knowing Jesus three times…Peter was among those waiting in Jerusalem. And when the Holy Spirit came, he was filled with a new boldness, and new fearlessness.

And so Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke to the people and reminded them of a prophecy in the book of Joel that was about what was happening that very day: *Acts 2:17-18 NRSV (17) 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (18) Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.*

Then Peter spoke about Jesus having come, sent by God. How he was among them and was “*a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know*”.

But Jesus was crucified – dead and buried. Peter continued: *24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him… 36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

And then something very important happened. Acts 2:37 “*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit…41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

On the day of Pentecost, a great number of new believers were baptized. It was quite the sight.

Now I want to speak directly today to those who are being baptized. I want to speak briefly about symbols. Signs of the faith, signs of life. Important symbols, and how they impact the life of a Christ-follower.

Often we talk about the first symbol of baptism going under the water to symbolize death. But today I want to suggest that the first symbol is when the baptismal candidates get into the baptistery. They will simply stand there. Only those who are alive can stand. Only those who have breath in their lungs can appreciate goodness in life. Only those alive can be found by God. That is common grace. That standing is a symbol of the grace of God; we have life and goodness in our lives even though we are, as the Bible says, spiritually dead until we receive Christ as Lord.

Ephesians chapter 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient*.

So perhaps we can see standing as the first symbol. You are alive by the grace of God and by the grace of God you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

The next symbol is, indeed, going into the water, and it is a symbol of dying. It is a symbol of having died to the old you; the one you knew before receiving new life in Jesus. Jesus also died, and as a follower of Jesus, you follow Him in dying to yourself. Gal 2:20 says *20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

This is a profound reality for followers of Jesus; that we take a lifetime coming to understand. We exchange our old life, our life colored by sin and self-centeredness, with a new life. The Bible calls it the ‘life of Jesus’.

Then we have the symbol of being under water. Being under the water is a symbol of having died. *Romans 6:3Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

The key to living a new life is dying to the old life. The key to embracing the Way of Jesus, the values of Jesus and the lifestyle of a Jesus-Follower is to know that you know that you know that you are dead to the old ways you used to live. *2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* Being under water is a symbol of having died. Unlike Jesus, mercifully, those who will today be baptized, will be underwater for only a second.

And third is the symbol of coming up out of the water. This is a symbol of…? Resurrection.

*Rom 6:5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Look at the Symbols. Standing, going under the water, being under the water and coming up out of the water. Common grace, dying to self, the old self dead, the new creation emerging from the water, resurrected to new life.

And this is where we come to today. Today our baptismal candidates… Steve, Diane, Marie, Gwen, Krista, Carl, Matthew, and Molly will go public with the fact that they are now alive to God in Jesus Christ.

After baptisms: You know…there’s a story in the Book of Acts about a eunuch who Philip happened upon. He was reading in Isaiah 53 about Jesus.

*Acts 8: 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" 37 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.*

So, if you are here today, if you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and are walking with Jesus, if you have become alive to Christ and you want to be baptized today, why shouldn’t you be? So, before I get out of the baptistery, who here today, which adults among us, would like to be baptized right now? Whosoever will may come!