

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Continual Creation

New Testament Lesson

Acts 2:1-21 (NRSV)

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine.

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

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. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Bible/Sermon Focus

This week Pastor Andy defined *evangelism* as, "Sharing the love and grace of God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and inviting people into a life-changing community of the Spirit. Evangelism is the ongoing, continual creation of the church, the Body of Christ" It's a pretty great definition. Especially when so many of the images that are conjured when we think of the word evangelism, can be negative.

This year as we celebrate Pentecost, we read again this amazing story of the sending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had told the people over and over that this would happen, but here it is,

finally. They were all together in one place, and the Spirit poured out over them, all of them. All of these different people who had different lives, backgrounds, and relationships to Christ. They, in all of their differences, received the same Spirit.

As a Christian community, we can relate to this outpouring of the Spirit. We feel it as we gather together, whether at the church, online, or sitting at a park, where two or three are gathered, we feel it. We can feel the Spirit moving among the gathered community, no matter where that community is. But as Pastor Andy pointed out on Sunday, we have to confess that there are people who are not gathering. We have to confess that some have drifted away from the community, and also that there are new people who need to be invited into the community.

At some point we have to name that if we have been blessed and changed and moved by the outpouring of the Spirit that we have experienced, then we are wrong to hoard it. If being part of the church, the body of Christ, has meant something to you, if your life has been changed, then perhaps there are others who need to be invited "in."

Evangelism is not a bad word. Perhaps the word has been restricted to use by only some Christians for too long. Perhaps it is time to rethink evangelism. If we don't like the connotations of the term, then maybe the Spirit is moving us to more fully live into and proclaim its actual definition. The church is made of all kinds of people, gathered in one house, one community, proclaiming the truth of a transformative God whose Spirit resides and moves among us, redeeming and creating community as she dances the breath of God between us all.

Discussion Questions

1. What images does the word evangelism conjure for you? What would it look like for you to claim or (re)claim this word?
2. Reflect on this quote from Sunday's sermon: *"If the power of the Spirit gave birth to the church initially, the first thing the church did with that power was to immediately begin re-creating itself."* What does this mean?
3. Reflect on this quote from Rev. Dr. Thomas Bohache *"... the Pentecost story is paradigmatic, for it shows the believers gathered together in one place, receiving the Holy Spirit as a group, and yet manifesting that same Spirit in different and diverse ways in order to advance God's one, unified Reign of inclusion and unconditional love..."*

Prayer

Spirit of the Living God, refresh, renew, reclaim, rework, recreate, redeem, resuscitate, restore, reimagine, and reassure us all. Amen.

Yes, they were all together in one place to catch the rush of the mighty wind and those little tongues of fire that landed on their heads, but they immediately went out into the crowd of people to talk about it. Doing so set the pattern for church, and sets a pattern for us as well.