

sermon 21.05.23

Acts 2: 1-21

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they all met in one room. Suddenly they heard what sounded like a violent, rushing wind from heaven; the noise filled the entire house in which they were sitting. Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each one. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as she enabled them.

Now there were devout people living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled. But they were bewildered to hear their native languages being spoken. They were amazed and astonished: “Surely all of these people speaking are Galileans! How does it happen that each of us hears these words in our native tongue? We are Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya around Cyrene, as well as visitors from Rome— all Jews, or converts to Judaism—Cretans and Arabs, too; we hear them preaching, each in our own language, about the marvels of God!”

All were amazed and disturbed. They asked each other, “What does this mean?” But others said mockingly, “They’ve drunk too much new wine.”

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd: “Women and men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem! Listen to what I have to say! These people are not drunk as you think—it’s only nine o’clock in the morning! No, it’s what Joel the prophet spoke of:

‘In the days to come—
it is our God who speaks—
I will pour out my Spirit
on all humankind.
Your daughters and sons will prophesy,
your young people will see visions,
and your elders will dream dreams.

Even on the most insignificant of my people,
both women and men,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

And I will display wonders
in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below:
blood, fire and billowing smoke.

The sun will be turned into darkness
and the moon will become blood
before the coming of the
great and sublime day of our God.

And all who call upon the name
of our God will be saved.'

God speaks to each of us as he makes us,
then walks with us silently out of the night.

These are the words we dimly hear:

You, sent out beyond your recall,
go to the limits of your longing.

Embody me.

Flare up like a flame
and make big shadows I can move in.

Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.

Just keep going. No feeling is final.

Don't let yourself lose me... Give me your hand.

Rilke, Book of Hours, I 59

Sermon -

BREATHE in the Paraclete - this gift, the holy spirit, here among us.

The book of Acts tells the story of the early church. It's written by the same person who penned the gospel of Luke.

The first chapter of Acts tells of the resurrected Christ with the disciples. IT reads:

- while staying with them, Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, saying "wait there for what God has promised... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4)

WAIT

STORY of waiting for Jesse's birth - waiting was hard work!

Uncertainty of what was next.

Would I be strong enough for what lay ahead?

We're living again in such a time of waiting - to open the church or wait, meet outside or inside... or do we continue to watch and wait on zoom.

Disciples are waiting.

Here in our scripture, they've gathered to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, (Shah - VOO - ot) 50 days after the beginning of Passover, for those gathered, almost 50 days after Jesus' crucifixion. In Judaism, Shavuot and Passover are linked. Passover is the celebration of the *freedom from Egypt, from bondage, brought about by God's redeeming power, and 50 days later is Shavuot, which means 'the completion', a celebration of the receiving of the Torah, the Law. Shavuot is a reminder for the Jews that physical liberation was incomplete without the spiritual redemption represented by receiving God's law.*

It's here, in the context of this celebration, which requires all able bodied Jews to come to Jerusalem, that Jesus' followers are gathered.

Waiting. Waiting for the promised Spirit.

Listen to the descriptive words of what happened that day -

Suddenly they heard what sounded like a violent, rushing wind...

Something appeared that seemed like tongues of fire

That separated and came to rest on each one.

Tongues of fire rested on EACH ONE.

ALL were filled with the HS and began *to speak in other languages*, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Take that in for a moment!

What was that like, to have a tongue of fire rest upon you?

WHAT WAS THAT LIKE? Suddenly having a gift of speaking in a new way? *What was it like for those who were speaking?*

Just imagine...

Alongside that,

Hold Bolsinger question -

What's our gift? What's the gift we as individuals, and as University Mennonite, have been blessed with to bring to the world?

Hold that question through the lens of this story.

What language might you speak - to whom might you suddenly be able to communicate with?

In this story today, we have the speakers - those with new, unexpected gifts to share.

And we have all these other people, there in Jerusalem for the holiday. There to celebrate.

For those listening it was a very different experience-

Descriptive words:

they were bewildered, amazed, astonished, disturbed...suspicious. They didn't see this as the working of the Spirit - for them this coming of the Holy Spirit was disruptive.

Appeared CHAOTIC to those listening. Threatening?

"What does this mean?" They ask.

When something is disruptive... how do we respond? Not usually with curiosity.

Holy Spirit is a disruptive force -

In this passage we have those who received the HS an astounding gift

AND those listening, hearing something new - questions -

What does this mean?

For others, down right suspicion.

What's our response - as those who receive the HS AND those who are invited to hear others who might have something startlingly new to say to us - those who have also been touched by the Spirit?

Again...

What's our response - as those who receive the HS

AND those invited to hear others who might have something startlingly new to say to us?

The HS is a disruptor! Creator of chaos!

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The presence of the HS is not new in scripture.

What makes this appearance of the HS here in Acts, different?

Look back in the gospel of Luke -

The gospel of Luke starts with stories of the unexpected and powerful working of the Holy spirit.

In the first chapter of Luke - Mary is visited by an angel and told the Holy spirit will come upon her,

and a few verses later, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit as she welcomed Mary into her home, proclaiming the fulfillment of the long awaited promise of the Messiah...

and then again, after months of silence, we hear Zechariah proclaim that his son shall indeed be named John, as he's filled with the Holy Spirit and prophecies.

The Holy Spirit is present and active - in the most unlikely of places and people in Luke's gospel.

So what's different? What's new about the coming of the Disrupter - the HS here on Pentecost?

Matt Skinner, pastor, teacher and podcaster, at Luther Seminary, says¹

Up until now, the HS came to individuals. Unexpected ones - women without power. The HS was certainly disruptive in their lives.

ACTS experience is different -

Here the Spirit doesn't just rest on individuals, no - it's poured on ALL flesh.

The Newness comes from this Image from Joel, that Peter quotes -

¹ <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/working-preachers-sermon-brainwave/id282364902?i=1000521879935>

“I will pour out my Spirit on ALL humankind.

Your daughters and sons will prophesy...
Even on the most insignificant of my people, both women and men,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days..”

We have here the universal filling of the spirit.

Without regard for all the categories we use to divide, the Spirit is for everyone - that's what's new on Pentecost. Universal outpouring of the Spirit.

Sounds chaotic. The Holy Spirit is disruptive.

Disruption, really, Jesus? I'm tired. I'm weary.

I'm ready for an easy spell ... uncomplicated, controllable...
this doesn't seem to be the way of Christ.

AND yet, Jesus said “I've come that you may have life... I've come that you may have my joy, and that my joy will be complete - will be enough... Come to me all you that are weary...”

I wonder - might there be a
Gift in the chaos?

Here, where they have So many languages present.
So many opportunities to communicate.
Here the story of Jesus' redeeming love Moves beyond a small group to a bigger potential audience.

The power of the outward motion of the Spirit was disorienting and terrifying and full of possibilities.

It invites us to re-imagine.

Consider that, the next time you're feeling like life is chaotic, out of control - maybe, just maybe, the Holy Spirit is here, at work...

This gift of the spirit was poured out on everyone. It's No longer just a group of insiders.

Come back with me to the holding of chaos - the potential to both be blessed with new ways of sharing God's love
AND hearing others speak to us in ways we've never heard before.

What might this new beginning have to say to us about our gifts, here, now in our lives?

What gift do we, as individuals, and as a church, have to bring?
How is the HS working through us, around us, in us? Inviting us to both speak and listen.

I want to introduce a new word I recently learned.

BOOZHOO

Boozhoo is an Ojibwe word that is typically used as a greeting.

Eddy Robinson, an Indigenous speaker and educator explains that for the Ojibwe, when they meet someone, they identify who they are and where they're from, and that starts with Boozhoo.²

But Boozhoo is so much more than that, he says.

Boozhoo is multi-layered, also meaning "I'm going to learn from you, and you can learn from me. I'm going to respect you and you can respect me."

BOOZHOO - maybe that's one way the HS is here, now. Prompting us to speak, and prompting us to listen. To listen to ALL the voices around us.

In these chaotic times - might we imagine the HS, here in the chaos, as the disruptor?

As we consider what gifts we have to offer the community -

Maybe we start with Boozhoo.

"I'm going to learn from you, and you can learn from me. I'm going to respect you and you can respect me."

May the HS disrupt, amaze, disturb, comfort and lead us into a new way of being.

BOOZHOO.

² [Boozhoo!! What's Your "Workaround Value?"](#)