

Grace Presbyterian Church, Orleans
“Come, Holy Spirit”
Acts 2: 1 - 21
Pastor Jonathan

June 9, 2019
Pentecost Sunday
Communion & Baptisms

On this Pentecost Sunday, talk to me about tornados. I understand one touched down here in Orleans this last week.

Jesus had always planned with a greater and holier imagination than his disciples could have expected. He, in the communion of the Holy Trinity, planned a way to both sacrifice himself so humanity could find the way back to God and to forever be with those He loved so deeply. How would that be possible? Both to die and to be with his friends?

Today’s imagination only brings forth images of a zombie, who is brought back to life, but only a shadow of the original, in a dark way. Other current cultural imaginations would bring forth a ghost, or a memory of some kind. Indeed, that is what Jesus confronted in the Upper Room when he appeared through the locked doors. This is where He Himself asked his friends to touch Him, to touch his scars, to stop doubting and believe, to finally trust His answer to the unanswerable questions of life. They saw Him, touched Him, worshipped Him, and asked, in their quietness, “What now, Lord?” The answer is not a “what?” but a “who?” After Jesus’ ascension, we move into a new season.

The answer is the Holy Spirit. A person, third person of the Trinity, addressed with “He” and “His,” not “it” or “its.” Jesus’ bodily earthly ministry was finished. That season was a very short one, in terms of human history. But the new season will continue until the new heaven and new earth appear. This is the season of the Holy Spirit. So we would do well to understand this Holy Spirit.

Dr. Luke, who we have been studying this year, closes his Gospel and opens a new book, called “Acts,” which is about what the Holy Spirit is doing in birthing the Church. Chapter 2 describes this: Wind...fire...communication in other languages...we have just read the account.

As Orleans experienced in this last week, wind can be exceptionally powerful, completely changing the landscape, physically and when that wind comes from the Holy Spirit, it means that people will be impacted

spiritually. Spiritual impact is the changing of the lives of those who choose to follow Jesus. We see Jesus, the healer. We follow Jesus, the truth teller. We love Jesus, the Way maker. He shows us the way to relate to one another and how to know God by confessing our sins, our broken ways, our rebellion against God, and submitting to God's way. Good news: What Jesus did is the way to know God, and live for God. Everything about the Holy Spirit points us to Jesus.

John the Baptizer had mentioned in his ministry, according to Dr. Luke in his gospel, 3:16, that Jesus would baptize with fire, not water. And here it is, in Acts 2. The fire goes out from Jesus through the Holy Spirit to the Church, and we see individuals with flames over their heads, and then going inside them, and then their being described as "filled with the Holy Spirit." This phrase "filled with the Holy Spirit" is regularly used in the Old Testament to talk about prophets with messages from God. Now every believer in Jesus Christ is receiving the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit. We all can speak out God's messages to all nations, as Jesus directs, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The flame is the cleansing, empowering, burning passion of choosing Jesus as your Master above all else. He is *kurios*, or Lord, greater than Caesar in Caesar's time, great than any other leader. And the world wide message starting in Jerusalem and going out to at least fifteen language groups mentioned in 2:9 of Acts. The Holy Spirit teaches those who cannot speak in other languages to speak in other languages to carry the Gospel to places where the Gospel is not known. The Mission field is right there altogether in one place, just like our mission field is here in Orleans. We don't have to go on long trips, the nations are here.

So listen to one another in each other's languages, and proclaim Jesus as the answer, in this confusing time. Jesus will sort out your questions, as you ask Him. Jesus will lead you. He will lead through this confusing time in the church and culture. Jesus is faithful.

This is as true today here, as it was nearly 2000 years ago there. Some will accuse you, both inside and outside the church: You must be drinking or smoking something because this Jesus stuff doesn't make any sense in any language. And that charge continues to be leveled against us who speak only one language or many languages. There is misunderstanding.

How could Jesus be the only way, in the midst of so many religions and so many ways? We proclaim him faithfully as He proclaims Himself. He says He is the Way, Truth and Life in John 14. He says, No one comes to the Father except through Him. He says that the Holy Spirit will remind you of everything Jesus has said to you. (John 14: 26) He says the Spirit will teach you all things. He will lead you as Rev. Chris comes next week to preach for the Call. Trust Jesus with your response.

And one of the things Jesus says in Matthew 19:4-6 is: ⁴“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’^[a] ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’^[b]?”⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

As far as I know, this has not changed. One speaker at General Assembly noted that Presbyterian polity is such that we are a Reformed and reforming church, always open to the Holy Spirit guiding us to new understandings of Scripture. Where is the Scripture on which is based the adoption of same sex marriage?

It was difficult at General Assembly. It was the first time I heard the use of the Spirit in a political way, i.e. progressives were saying the Spirit was moving in the adoption of same sex marriage and ordination of homosexuals, but not moving when traditionalists/biblical Christians were being given the right to freedom of conscience and action on these two points. I’m sure my Pentecostal friends have lots of examples where the Holy Spirit is used to make political statements, rather than simply a reference to the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth.

We must remember who the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit gives us power to witness (Acts 1:8). If evangelism and outreach is your passion for this place, cry out, “Come, Holy Spirit!” The Holy Spirit is the One who is the Counsellor: convicting the world (read: you and me) of guilt re: sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-9). The Spirit will guide you into all truth (John 16:13). We trust the Holy Spirit to guide Adeline and Christopher, Colin and Becky, as they raise Isla and Everett. We trust the Holy Spirit for their own relationships to Jesus, and all their children to trust Jesus. The Spirit takes from what belongs to Jesus and makes it know to you (John 16:15). The Spirit will not contradict Jesus or the Father.

So when we hear from someone that the Spirit is moving or not, we should always be comparing what we understand is scriptural teaching to this appraisal. Can the Spirit be moving the Church to adopt same sex marriage? I would say “no” on the basis of the Scriptures being clear about what marriage is, Jesus is clear on this subject. On the other hand, could the Spirit have been working at General Assembly, when the progressives saw that the Inclusive option was excluding all or most of the traditionalists thus leading them to amend the B option in the direction of their conscience before God. I would say, “yes” on the basis of caring for those who believed that this is the Scriptural position and the Church believing it was the Scriptural position the day before.

Where do we go from here as a Church? We stand up for God’s Word. We prophesy in the power of the Holy Spirit, speaking as God’s representatives in a broken world, as Peter did. We care for one another, no matter what we believe on this subject. We listen to one another, as Jesus listened to all. He called them to truth and love, and we must do the same in our time and place.

Because we have learned that we must show forth the Gospel to all, we must prepare ourselves to care for those who we may not have previously cared for. At the Converge conference, where we were encouraged to pastorally care for others who self-define in these other sexual categories from a biblical point of view; we were encouraged to consider what it might look like to care for a trans or transitioning person, or a person who self identifies as same sex attracted or one of the other letters of the LGBTQ community, as they present themselves at our door. They are a people group who need the Gospel as much as we do. The hard question is whether we could get beyond how they look or sound to really care for them in a Gospel way.

The Holy Spirit brings us to strange and mysterious places. I am not becoming a progressive, but rather am asking God what it means for me and for us at Grace to be a people who take the Gospel seriously enough to love those who come through the door and beyond, and who invite them to discipleship as we too are disciples.

As we come to the Table together today, we come as we are, open ourselves to the Holy Spirit who guides, directs and counsels us. We say with the ancient Christians, “Come Holy Spirit, have your way in us.” Remember to do so as you receive the elements today. God bless you as you trust Jesus.

Let us pray.

