

Sermon: When the Spirit Rests Upon Us

Scripture: Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30; Acts 2:1-8, 12-17

Pentecost Sunday

May 28, 2023

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Our first Scripture reading comes from Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30 where we witness a remarkable moment in the history of God's people as the burden of leadership is shared and the Spirit of God descends upon a group of chosen individuals. The passage reminds us of the importance of community, cooperation, and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Listen to the Spirit who is speaking to you this morning.

Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30

<sup>16</sup> So the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting and have them take their place there with you. <sup>17</sup> I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.

<sup>24</sup> So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered seventy of the elders of the people and placed them all around the tent. <sup>25</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders, and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.

<sup>26</sup> Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, so they prophesied in the camp. <sup>27</sup> And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." <sup>28</sup> And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" <sup>29</sup> But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!" <sup>30</sup> And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp. Amen.

Our New Testament reading comes from Acts 2:1-8, 12-17. It recounts the extraordinary day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples with great power and ignited a fire within their hearts. Here now the Word of the Lord.

Acts 2:1-8, 12-17

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

<sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup> But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

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

<sup>17</sup> '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.

*Text: The Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders, and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. Numbers 11:25*

Let us pray. Lord, as we open our hearts to you for your Word that quenches the thirst of our souls, may your Spirit fill us, sustain us, and empower us to do your will. May the word of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

Today, as we gather on this sacred day of Pentecost, we celebrate the wondrous outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples and all believers. In a way, we are celebrating the birth of the church. The renowned theologian, Karl Barth, once said, "The Holy Spirit is the Comforter who ensures that the Church remains what it is: a community of believers united by their faith and love for Jesus Christ." This comforting presence of the Spirit reminds us that we are not alone in our journey of faith, but rather united across generations by a common bond in Christ.

The same Spirit of God that empowered the 70 elders of the Israelites along with Moses, the same Spirit that descended upon Jesus like a dove, the same Spirit that rested upon the disciples on the day of first Pentecost, that same Spirit is connecting all of us to one another and to the One Lord that we worship today.

The Spirit of God that is powerful and passionate like a tongue of fire came with a sound like a violent rushing wind – yet it gently rested on each of the disciples, and the same gentle yet powerful and passionate Spirit is resting upon us now.

But why resting? I was puzzled what it means to be resting upon us. According to Isaiah, the spirit of the Lord rested on David; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord<sup>1</sup> rested on David. When Isaiah proclaims of the God's chosen, foreshadowing Christ, the Spirit of God is put upon him.<sup>2</sup> What is the difference? While the Spirit of God was put upon, imposed upon, Christ to act according to the will of the Spirit, God wants us who has the Spirit of God resting upon us, to depend on and rely on God's Holy Spirit, so that we may tap into the passion and power of the Spirit.

This is where the mercy of God can be seen. God, who is in the business of reconciliation places the power and authority of Christ's name in our hands. The people who are once broken, unable, and even doubted Christ were given second chances. David had his moment of weakness and wrongdoings. 70 elders who received the Holy Spirit had once created a golden calf to worship. We, too, had our moments of hiding in our own rooms – physical or metaphysical - behind the locked doors like the disciples. Yet, Christ broke through and came to all of us, saying "peace be with you," as Christ displayed his scars in his hands, feet, and his side - the very cost of our redemption and forgiveness.

Through the resting of the Spirit upon us, God has given us the opportunity to pay it forward as we turn from our ways and choose God's will. Disciples in today's Acts passage were given the ability to speak in various languages to share the good news of Christ to the world who have not yet heard. In the modern day, we might be getting a different language, a language that we didn't know we knew or have considered. Rather than the language of anger, hurt, and rage, it might be a language of love for some to emulate Christ's love, which enabling us to be vessels of hope, love, and unity in a world that is desperately in need of God's care. For others, it might be a language of forgiveness and reconciliation instead of accusation and blame – to be able to forgive others whom we could not give without the help of the Spirit or maybe to forgive oneself from one's past. For others, it might be a language of hope and renewal to overcome the voices of anxiety, depression, and doubt. Whatever the ability that the Spirit endows will be for the purpose of reconciling the world to God and to bring grace to those who are separated from God's love.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 11:1-9

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 42:1-9

People say when a person is in love, they do foolish things. In the biblical times, they must not have spoken of love or understand it as we do now since speaking of love and emotions are more of a modern phenomenon. For many of us, our father's did not speak of love, and we grew up understanding what that may be without those words being used. That is why, maybe, they used the words or term drunk on wine was written in the Bible. They knew what a drunkard looked like. Being foolish in worldly eyes yet being able to do something that they couldn't understand, as if they witnessed the love of Christ being displayed for the people to see for the first time and they were astonished and amazed at the love that transformed people, inspired people, and brought out the passion in every one of those disciples.

As we celebrate Memorial Weekend, we remember the sacrifices of the women and men who defended our freedom. There are also legacies that they have left behind that display God's Spirit even in the battlefield which their act of love that breaks every logic and understanding amid wars. One of well-known and documented stories is from World War I, where Christ's spirit was resting upon the soldiers on Christmas eve and Christmas day in 1914. While the men of the British Expeditionary Force were in a trench facing against the German troops, on these particular days, the bullets did not fly. Rather, a joyous peace reigned as they sang carols together and even played a soccer game together in the no-man's land.<sup>3</sup> Although it might have been a brief truce, they shared this moment as a community of believers united by their faith and love for Jesus Christ. And it is for us to hear and recognize, that even in the midst of darkness, God's love will shine through.

Friends, the Spirit of God knows no boundaries. It is alive and active, moving within and among us, and through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to love unconditionally, just like Christ loves each and every one of us unconditionally. In a world marked by divisions, the Holy Spirit empowers us to break down barriers, bear each other's burdens, and extend love and care as Christ would have done here and now. Therefore, may the Holy Spirit continue to inspire us, young and old, to walk together in the footsteps of our Savior, Jesus Christ, as we shine with the love of God and make a lasting impact in our world. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-real-story-of-the-christmas-truce>