



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

October 13, 2013

"Pentecost: The Spirit Fills Us" (Book of Acts Sermon Series)

The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

Acts 2:1 *When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.*

Acts 2:2 *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.*

Acts 2:3 *Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.*

Acts 2:4 *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

Acts 2:5 *Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.*

Acts 2:6 *And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.*

Acts 2:7 *Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"*

Acts 2:8 *And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?*

Acts 2:9 *Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,*

Acts 2:10 *Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya*

belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

Acts 2:11 *Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."*

Acts 2:12 *All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"*

Acts 2:13 *But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."*

Acts 2:14 *But 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.*

Acts 2:15 *Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.*

Acts 2:16 *No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:*

Acts 2:17 *'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.*

Acts 2:18 *Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.*

Acts 2:19 *And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs*

on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

Acts 2:20 *The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.*

Acts 2:21 *Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'*

(A scene from the movie *The Bible* was shown.)

What we have just seen and heard is a dramatic presentation of Pentecost, one of the most pivotal events in the history of Christianity. The word *Pentecost* is a transliteration of the Greek word *Pentekostos*, which means *fifty*.

Pentecost happened 50 days after Jesus was resurrected when the Holy Spirit came swooping in and upon the Apostles. That same Spirit—with the same power, might, and inspiration—is available to all of us today.

Here's the setting (it's like a thriller movie). It's fifty days since Jesus was resurrected. The disciples are scared. They're fearful for their lives because the Romans and the religious leaders and their Temple Police are chasing after them, just like they were after Jesus. So the disciples hide in a house.

They were comforted when they saw Jesus resurrected.

But then they were confused when Jesus told them that He had to leave and that they had to wait for a promise from Father. What promise? What did that mean?

And then Jesus gave His very last words before He ascended into heaven when He said: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*

Much earlier Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, *“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth;” (John 16:13)*

So the disciples waited and waited in a house not knowing what they were waiting for.

Have you ever been told to wait for something? That normally means maybe 20 minutes or maybe an hour or maybe a day. I hate waiting. I don't even like waiting in a grocery checkout line. I count how many people are in front of me, and how many are in each line, and then I count how many items are in their shopping cart. And if they have more than the 10 or less items in the express line – that really makes me impatient. That's just for a grocery checkout line.

But can you imagine the disciples just waiting not minutes but days and looking at each other day after day, afraid to go outside not even knowing what they are waiting for, and then on the 10th day at about 9 in the morning (BOOM, BOOM BOOM, brighter than the moon, moon, moon) the Holy Spirit falls upon them!

There is this huge sound of ear-splitting rushing wind that was howling, blasting, roaring through the house. Suddenly, tongues of fire started to appear over each person's

head. And incredibly these scared, fearful people were filled with the Holy Spirit.

They stagger out into the streets filled with so much joy that people think they are drunk. The disciples find that they can speak in a myriad of different languages that they never learned: Greek languages, Asian Languages, languages from Crete, Pamphylia, Egypt, Mesopotamia and more.

It's exactly what Jesus said would happen. God would send His Spirit to fall on the followers of Jesus to give them power, incredible wisdom, and supernatural abilities like the ability to speak in languages that they didn't know till then.

The Holy Spirit's power that came on them was so strong that Peter and the disciples went outside and stood in a crowd and boldly told them about Jesus. The effect? Three thousand people became believers and were baptized that day alone! And the Gospel began to spread throughout the world to even the Gentiles, meaning those who are not Jews, which then includes us today. We wouldn't be here worshipping the Lord if it were not for Pentecost. And the miracles have kept on rolling, wave after wave throughout the centuries. (The first meaning of Roll Tide!)

So what does this all mean?

The Holy Spirit is often the most anonymous of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We get God the Father and God the Son, but what is the Holy Spirit for?

The Holy Spirit is always referred to as a person in the Bible. It is not a cosmic energy force. It is not an “it.” It is a person sent to us by God for any follower of Jesus.

Second, our passage shows that the filling of the Holy Spirit is for ordinary people like the original disciples were: common fishermen like Peter, James, and John; tax collectors like Matthew; doubters like Thomas; and historian/physicians like Luke. It is not for the privileged few but for people from all walks of life.

Third, we see that the Holy Spirit is for all races. The disciples break out in different languages to communicate to all cultures that the Spirit is for all people.

Why did Pentecost happen that way? To get our attention because sometimes we can be really dense! Throughout the centuries and especially now, drama is used to get our attention for an important message. There can be dance or acting or music or video or lights or sound effects or smoke machines. We use them all today.

God often uses incredibly dramatic methods to get our attention. He uses supernatural events to say, “Look, it is I, and I have a message and a mission for you!”

That is why God uses miracles, signs and wonders, like the rushing of wind, and tongues of fire (talk about audio/visual technique!) something that breaks into our ordinary day to say there is something, someone greater than we who has something to say to us.

What happened at the windy, fiery, miraculous Pentecost? It was an amazing display of God's dramatic voice! It's like, as Lloyd Ogilvie wrote:

“Wind rushes into our houses and changes things. It blows away cobwebs of fear and the layered dust of uncertainty. When God's wind blows into our hearts, we find new thoughts and emotions stirring.

The disciples were quickened and resuscitated by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Fire burns off the things that cripple us and prevents us from serving God. The Spirit of God burns away the chaff in our hearts and enables us to carry out Christ's ministry on earth.

"When dross is burned away there is pure metal left behind. The Holy Spirit's indwelling gives us a character transplant and transforms us into new creatures." (Drumbeat of Love, by Lloyd Ogilvie, pp 58-59)

The King James Revised Standard version of the Bible calls the Holy Spirit the Comforter. In later versions, the Spirit is called The Advocate, like a defense lawyer, a powerful person who defends and comforts us. That is a more accurate translation, I think.

The word "comforter" comes from Latin the words *fortis*, which means "brave," and *com*, which means "with." Joined together as one word, "comforter" means "one who fills people WITH strength and courage."

Today we might think of a comforter as a warm blanket or a person who says, "That's okay, poor baby," and pats our head. No, the Holy Spirit as the Comforter fills us with strength and courage to do what Jesus wants us to do in the world, like an Advocate.

Now you might ask, "Why do we need the Holy Spirit?" You ready for this? This might hurt. This will first seem peculiar but it will make sense. Here it is: **We cannot give what we do not have.**

That's what University of Houston Research Professor Brene Brown writes. We cannot give what we do not have. What she means is we

cannot give love to other people if we don't have love in our OWN hearts.

She says parents don't like to hear that. But the fact is we cannot

pass on to our children love, courage, and grace, when we do not have them ourselves. How can we expect our kids to be loving if we are not, courageous if we are not, compassionate if we are not, gracious and forgiving if we are not, faithful, if we are not, have integrity if we do not, peacemaking if we are fighting all the time in front of them. We cannot give or pass on what we don't have.

The father who tells his son "never lie," but then takes him to a movie and says, "Let's pretend you are younger so you'll get a cheaper ticket" means he will not really pass on integrity to the child for the father does not have full integrity in his heart. He's not modeling it for his son. You can't give or pass on what you don't have in your heart.

Brene Brown would say, "The space between how we behave, what we practice every day and our aspirational values.....that [hyprocritical] gap is where we lose people.

"That gap from where we stand and practice and what we profess is where people disengage.

"People are not looking for perfection. We're looking for people who [really] practice love, all messy and gritty." (from a talk by Brene Brown at the Leadership Summit at Willow Creek in 2013)

But you say, "Dan, you say, we cannot give what we don't have, but I don't have that kind of love. I am not perfect. I admit that. There is a gap in my life. I am not consistent. I talk about love, but I don't really love the unlovable. I really don't know how to

forgive. I really don't want to tell people about God. What do I do about that gap? I don't always have the love and compassion and courage I should have. How can I have it?"

The answer is: we can have it through the infilling of the Holy Spirit, just like what the Holy Spirit did on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to do the things that God wants us to do, like show love, compassion, and grace to others. The Holy Spirit fills the gap.

Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, used the Greek word *eplerosen* to describe the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

The phrase "infilling of the Spirit" in the Bible means not just being filled to the brim, but rather being filled over and beyond the brim. The Spirit pours in, flows and over goes way over the top to overflowing! When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit soaks us, saturates us, flows in, and affects every facet, function and faculty of our mind, body, emotions, and soul. Every crack and crevasse is filled with the Spirit. And the first response to being filled with the Holy Spirit is UTTER JOY! No wonder the apostles appeared to be drunk. They were drunk with joy!

The Spirit comes into our lives and we are just overflowing, bubbling over with supernatural love, courage to love as Jesus loves, to use His power to heal as Jesus healed, and to have courage to share the Gospel even if we are thrown into sacrificial situations where we no longer live a comfortable life.

We can have the courage to not give up. We can have the strength to get up after being knocked down. We can have the courage to move out of our comfort zones and have a changed life.

Brene Brown says, "You can choose courage or you can choose comfort, but you cannot choose both. They are mutually exclusive." (Ibid., Willow Creek Leadership Summit).

That's why I asked that we sing the song *Oceans* today. I cling to those lyrics when I am going through a tough time. I hold fast to that when I know I must do something courageous for God. Remember what we sang in the song *Oceans*:

*You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep My faith will stand*

*And I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine*

*Spirit lead me where my trust is without
borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could
ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Savior.*

If you have ever felt that your life as a Christian has been powerless or blah or boring, or bitter, it may be that you have not sought to be filled with the Spirit and you have been living all this time on your own human strength, trying to do it all on your own power.

But you were never supposed to live on your own power when you chose to be a follower of Jesus. Instead you were supposed to ask for, wait for the Holy Spirit to fill you up. Oh yes, there was an initial filling of the Holy Spirit when you became a follower of Jesus, but there should be a continual filling of the Spirit.

When the Spirit fills you, it's like experiencing the difference of living life as a triple-A-battery Christian and then it grows to being a 9-volt-battery Christian. There is so much more power, love, hope, and optimism in us that we will, like the first century disciples, have joy and courage, and be able to heal the sick, cast out demons, and spread the gospel.

But you say, "I can't do that Dan, I am so far from being pure and perfect. And, by the way, is anyone pure?" For some insight on that question, let me read to you a Greg Laurie Daily Devotional entitled, "Who Can Really Be Pure in Heart?"

"A happy person will be a holy person, because Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). But who could ever be pure in heart? You can. I can. We must understand what this statement means.

"By pure in heart, Jesus is not saying that we can never have an impurity in our hearts and never be inconsistent. Otherwise, we all would be disqualified, because the Bible clearly teaches "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).

"So here is how it works: we come to God poor in spirit. We see ourselves as we really are. We mourn over our condition. And like the psalmist, we pray, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me' (Psalm 51:10).

"In our culture, we often refer to the heart as the center of emotion, and we refer to the mind as the center of intellect.

"But in the Hebrew culture, the heart referred to everything. The heart was the very center of

personality. It was the center of the emotions as well as the mind. "And it included the thinking process. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he."

"The heart is the center of who you are. This means that with all of your being, you should be pure.

"But being pure does not mean being flawless. A good translation of the word pure would be "single" or "focused." So to be pure in heart means to have a single-minded devotion to Jesus.

"To be pure in heart is to seek to live a holy life, because that is the secret to happiness. If you want to be happy, then seek to be holy. Don't chase after happiness. Chase after holiness." (<http://www.harvest.org/devotional/archive/devotion/2010-09-29.html>)

This morning, we have a chance to chase after holiness and seek to be pure in heart. We have a chance to fill that gap where we know we don't have the ability to handle everyday stresses, forgive that person in our lives, love the unlovable, or care about those who don't know Jesus. We have a chance to have real joy and power in our lives!

This morning, I am going to pray that you all be filled with the Holy Spirit. Yes, you! I am going to ask that the Spirit fall upon you and fill you.

And after this mass prayer, I will say a benediction and invite all those who want more prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit to come up, and I and the prayer team will meet you down here to pray for you to be filled right now. The rest of you can sing the last song as people come up and then leave.

As I said before, whenever Pam and I are in a worship service at another church and someone says, anyone who wants prayer to be more filled with the Holy Spirit, Pam and I always go up for prayer. The last time this happened we were up in the balcony and we went down to the front with a huge crowd getting prayed for by the prayer team. I just stand and wait my turn and finally one of the prayer team comes up and prays a short prayer for me and off I go being more filled.

I have learned that to be filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't have to be a one-time filling, like a gas tank in a car. You will use it all up and then that's it. It's more like a balloon where it can get bigger and bigger with each breath of air. It's like a pilot light. We all have pilot lights when we accept Jesus. And maybe it's been a pilot light for years. We need to ignite it to make it bigger. A fire in a fireplace grows bigger when the wind blows on it.

Someone once asked Oswald Chambers, author of the famous *My Utmost for His Utmost*, "Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?" He said, "Yes, but I leak." I believe that, like Oswald Chambers, we're all leaky.

As God blows His Spirit into you, I believe the fire in our hearts can get bigger and bigger. We can have more power in our prayers to help and pray healing for others.

We can love the unlovable and forgive the unforgivable and have a real desire as was for the first disciples to tell the world about what Jesus has done for us. This has been true for me.

And what do we feel when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. For some they feel incredible peace. That's what I feel. For others they say it is like "liquid fire" or they feel warm or they feel tingles. For many they don't feel anything. Though I do recall praying for

a man to be filled with the Holy Spirit right here in the sanctuary, and I asked him if he felt anything. And he said no. Gary Toh was with me and I said, "Are you sure?" And he said no, nothing at all. But Gary noticed that he was crying and tears were flowing. So sometimes something happens to us that we are not even aware of.

Let us ask for the Spirit to fill our lives now. Please join me in prayer.

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