

John 14: 8-17

Pentecost

June 5, 2022

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You've got to love it when there is a snafu on Pentecost and all your best laid plans go up in smoke and your guest preacher catches covid and important beloved guests are coming to hear him and suddenly you really DO have to rely on the holy spirit!

I mean...C'mon, Holy Spirit...I'm ordained and everything! I wish you'd have given me a heads up but... I guess that's not how the Holy Spirit works, is it? It doesn't get it all down in the calendar.

So, come Holy Spirit come. Between the words I say and the words you hear may the Holy Spirit be present

In the First Testament reading for today what I hear loud and clear is that the God of Israel is afraid of the power of the people, God is afraid of the power of people who are united in one heart and one mind and one language.

Oh no! says God, *because when they are truly united in the spirit of truth then they won't need me anymore! When the people truly understand each other, when they all speak the same language, when together they are able to hear the voice of truth and are able to recognize what is actually going on...what the reality is...and are willing to act on it in community, they will be invincible! They will not need me, because they will realize that the power to bring people together in truth is a power already within them!*

And so, like many good Gods of the good old stories, God confounds them. God gives them to speak in different languages so they can't immediately understand each other and the truth remains obscured. And why? Because God wants them to need him, to belong to Him to vote for him maybe and to maintain his temple as a place of holiness and power and control *set apart*.

It's a good story. And it makes sense. It describes a reality we see in our world today: we *are* a people fractured and manipulated by people in power be they businessmen or partisan representatives or lobbies and interest groups or internet companies. We are blinded by their agendas and our own agendas and points of view, and locked up in separate chambers of in the tower of Babel. We obviously need the help of a higher power.

Let's go back to the Bible

Years pass. Jesus comes: he says outrageous things. One of the most outrageous is this.

I am the new temple Jesus says.

And the temple of God is within you he whispers.

Honor it.

And then Jesus is torn down and destroyed just as the Jewish temple will be torn down and destroyed for good measure.

But Jesus has prepared for his followers to outlive him and carry on his message. To live the way of God not only in the temple but in their lives, in their very bodies made holy.

Nonetheless as we hear in today's Gosepl reading, before Jesus is murdered, Philip asks him for proof.

Lord, show us the father and we will be satisfied.

Jesus shakes his head.

Jiminy cricket he says. *Don't you know* Jesus says *that I am in the father and the father is in me? Let me repeat that. Don't you know that I am in the father and the father is in me and I am in you. And therefore the father is in you too!?*

Listen: he says taking a breath. *Going forward, It is only through you that my works will be seen in the world. Your hands your feet your minds your hearts carrying my message of truth into the world. And when you forget...when you forget what I said or what it meant, the Holy Spirit, the spirit of truth will remind you.*

But says Philip

But, but says Thomas

But but! we say 2,000 years later.

No one believes in truth anymore It's all spin. Religion, government, institutions: they are all corrupt. There is no one to trust. Walter cConkite is dead and we all have our own news sources. It's all just a matter of opinion. The truth is relative.

No, it's not Jesus says.

The truth is in the Gospel Jesus says.

Let me sum it up for you. Spark notes version. Love God (what is above and beyond and within) and love your neighbor (all your neighbors)... as yourself. That's enough

Let me be clear, he continues: I didn't say anything about gay people or abortion or firearm safety. You will have to figure that out for yourselves but this should help

Love God

And love your neighbor

And love yourself.

Any spirit leading you in a different direction is not me, period.

Harumph, say the people.

Which brings us to the reading from Acts. The disciples are isolated in the upper room. Jesus has been dead for 50 days. There have been odd sightings where he is seen but not recognized. And other odd sightings where he recognized but not seen. And then...nothing.

He is gone. Not a sound. Not a vision. Not a flicker of flame.

The disciples are grief stricken and afraid. They feel abandoned, as often we do too.

Suddenly there is the sound of a great wind...tongues (as if of flame) rest upon them, freeing their own tongues to speak to each other

and be understood. to speak the truth in love. To see what is actually happening.

They step outside. This precious, precious world. There they meet Parthians and Medes and Elamites and... what's this? People from ST John's and Holy Trinity and Trinity Portland and maybe a few people from 1st Church next door and the great Methodist church in Portland and people from Wyoming and Perk across the street and California and Texas and Somalia and Ukraine and even Massachusetts and they *all* understand each other. The Holy Spirit cuts through their differences of culture and language and they can all hear the truth. *But what is it?*

What is truth? scoffs Pilate.

The first definition of truth in the dictionary is pretty simple and down to earth. It's not some far-flung ideal or disembodied idea. The truth is: *the body of real things, events, and facts* : *ACTUALITY*

So, what is actually happening here?

And someone decides to quote from the 1st testament prophet Joel because it seems apropos. Joel says:

“In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

I will show wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.'^[c]

This is called an apocalyptic vision and it sounds familiar to me because it sounds like our own times. When I hear my own sons' and daughter saying at the dinner table that they honestly don't believe the world will be around in 30 years, I need to listen. When they say they hope they can travel into outer space before the world burns up and then I hear the statistics on depression and mental illness I am called to witness to the truth. To that indisputable actuality. And yet then I find I have to turn off the news because I can't bear to hear any more true stories of blood and fire and smoky mist... And that's when I realized I need your help. I'm sorry but I really need your help.

You see, I haven't been able to look at the photos of the children killed in Uvalde. Each face so alive with promise. I couldn't stand it this time.

It was too traumatizing. **But isn't that what the church is for?!**

To give us strength to acknowledge what is actually happening? To give us the strength to testify to it. But I can't do it alone. So, I'd like to invite whoever wants to to come up and read one of the names of the children and teachers killed in Uvalde Texas. After each name we will pray: Have Mercy Lord.

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An apocalyptic vision is terrifying but ultimately it is hopeful, because it signals that we **MUST** change even when it seems impossible. We are one body. And today we celebrate the birthday of the church: the whole church, where we pledge to listen for the voice of truth and together look with fierce and fiery **HOPE** into

the face of reality. We welcome with love, Brienne who joins us with her body today. What if we even in our brokenness and weakness are exactly what the world needs now? What would we do if we really believed that?! Here we are together: Trinity Portland, ST John's North Guilford, Holy Trinity and Lighthouse Church and banded together in the upper room with all the churches across this land. Let's step outside and ground ourselves in reality. Let's step outside and raise our voices and in the power of the holy spirit, testify to the truth, to what is actually going on. That is how we begin to heal this world.

amen