



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Day of Pentecost Affirmation of Baptism June 4, 2017

Pentecost 2017 Acts 2:1-21

“When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place...” Those words always strike me as amazing. Imagine what they had experienced in past days, in the days since the moment in time when...

✠ they followed Jesus along the way: heard him, watched him, served beside him, deserted him, but met him as the Risen Lord in Galilee. [Peter, Andrew, James, John, Thomas.] It is likely a miracle that they even gathered at all.

Today, we gather on the Day of Pentecost. Not just one more worship moment, but on the day when we remember the reception of the Holy Spirit to those who would live Jesus’ mission in the world.

Today is about that Holy Spirit...the One who inspires and empowers us for life in mission. For a moment we do well to ask---

1. What happened that day in Jerusalem? The disciple/apostles were gathered. Simply present in Temple with Jews from every land, celebrating Pentecost. Imagine a gathering like Easter at Saint Andrew’s. Hundreds in one place.

With dramatic sights and sounds, they received the Holy Spirit and began to share the story of Jesus in many languages. The crowds were amazed, confused, noted that they were all “Galileans” and must have had too much to drink.

Now, Peter...the one who had been a leader of the 12, among the first to confess that Jesus was “Messiah.” Yet, the one who denied him, walked away from him, begins to speak boldly. And shared that Jesus counts as the One who came to bring God’s love and peace into the world. The One who gave Peter a new beginning, gives everyone a new beginning to those who “call on the name of the Lord.”

Jesus’ promise is the Holy Spirit to be bold in living as His witnesses and friends in the world, they did from Jerusalem to the ends of the world...like Bellevue!

2. What is happening today at Saint Andrew’s? Seems pretty traditional...Sunday...worship... but, one service (Summer Schedule)...made very special with the Affirmation of Baptism, Confirmation of Kasten, Vishal, Parker, Cade, and Sammy. Each gifted by the Holy Spirit in the waters of Holy Baptism.

And this is the power of God as we gather: each of them a part of us, brothers and sister in Christ. Think of where they have come from today. Loved by their families and friends, part of us in ways that will last forever. They have learned and served; participated in every ministry that we support as a congregational family.

When they have been hungry, we fed them; at each stage of their human development, their discipleship, we have been there for and with them. As they make their affirmation we will surround them in a "cocooning" of love because the love we share, we know because God, in Jesus, has loved us into community, the family of Saint Andrew's and the communion of saints!

3. Today, we are "A Gathering and Inviting Church in Mission...with Five Themes":

- 1) We are called to renew our Baptismal Vows... to be a people bold in our witness to Jesus. Listen as they are invited to do so and as they profess their faith and to continue to be discipleFit, saying with them, "I do, and I ask God to help and guide me."
- 2) We are called to support one another.
At their Baptisms, the congregations promised to pray for them...be with them on the journey...to work beside them in building the Body of Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit building and renewing relationships then and NOW. This day our support is clear and it must be so as long as we share life together.
- 3) We are called to continue with them in deepening our relationships with Christ. I recall my Confirmation Pastor saying, "Confirmation is not GRADUATION." I would add it is renewed engagement in the days ahead. Consider for example, that our Vacation Bible Schools are primarily staffed by our younger members in the 8th grade through high school. Recall that Mary Davis, co-chair this July, is in her 25th year of serving in the adventure of VBS!
- 4) We are called to continue to provide a safe place for all of our students to have a day of Affirmation of Baptism. This is our smallest class in a long time; in the next years they will grow again to 12 or more. As each new day unfolds, if asked to serve, serve; to mentor, mentor; to be in cross-generational mission and ministry, be there and be examples of those who are fit in following and serving Jesus.
- 5) We are called to be an inviting church in mission.
Remember what became of the first Holy Spirit receivers? They turned (I like to say) the world right side up. Bold in witness; reaching out in times of crisis, receiving others into the family to grow in the love we are called to share even today. Remember those who taught you the love of Jesus? The one who invited you to church, to youth group, to a small group, to an event in a congregation. It just may be that you are here because someone invited you along the way. I know it is so often within the families of our congregation.

An "inviting church." Let me give you a cue for the week ahead. In conversation, let these leads guide you into faithful witness: "My church....." Or, "My church is really good at....." Before long, there may be Pentecost 2017 as others come to know that in Christian community there is forgiveness, peace and joy, hope, and love which knows no end in Christ.

May the Holy Spirit protect our confirmands and lead us into the world to life high the Cross of Christ. Amen!