

MESSAGE - Facing a Huge Job

June 5, 2022

Rev. Lisa Kruse-Safford

SCRIPTURE Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,^[b] ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "'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. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

~~~~~

Story of the boy, Billy in my sister's classroom who went from hiding from his writing assignments to sitting at his desk and doing them after he was baptized. When asked what changed, he said, "*Mrs. Parsons, I got the Holy Spirit a-working in me!*"

When faced with an impossible task....had a hard time even getting going. So he hid from it.

I've done that –

- When thinking about starting a new exercise program – you see the end results and think: "I've got such a long way to go."
- A difficult semester – when you look at the entire syllabus.
- How can things in this broken world get better? Can anything change?
- Or with the disciples: to go and be witnesses to the entire world

John reports Jesus command as what he spoke to Peter: "feed my sheep"

Luke writes: you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Mark writes it as: Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.

Matthew writes: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

To all the world? To the ends of the earth? All nations?

"I'm having a hard time telling just my neighbor or coworker.

It was a huge job.

When faced with a huge task, the hardest part may be just in getting going.

Which is actually true in the world of physics - Getting going from a stopped point is the hardest part; it takes more energy than it does to keep something going.

- A car uses more gas to get moving than to keep moving,

What if those early disciples didn't have it in them to get rolling in the first place?

But God knew that.

- Jesus had said to them: but wait in Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high.

- They were going to need a good push – Jesus knew this. God gave the push. God gave the Holy Spirit.

Divine power.

Divine ability.

Divine confidence.

That can get the job done.

Divine power: they needed to move from a place of inertia: the place of doing nothing or remaining unchanged.

Something happened within them in which they could no longer do nothing.

What is that something that happened? Can we manufacture it ourselves? No, it comes from outside of us.

Divine ability: given the gifts to be able to accomplish the work.

Could speak in other languages

Divine confidence: what changed for them from being a small group meeting behind doors and being people who stood in the same public places where Jesus taught and got in trouble: the Holy Spirit. They were confident in the message. They were confident in their experience. They were confident to witness.

They moved from "don't go! Come back!" to having the Holy Spirit "a-working in them"

Think about Billy....oh it's a cute story....but we have to admit that something changed in him. And he just couldn't act like nothing had happened to him; not even in school.

Think about Pentecost...it has some unusual things that happened: tongues of fire and a violent wind inside the house, but something changed in those earliest disciples. And they couldn't go backward and act like nothing happened to them.

What relevance might it have for us?

Consider COVID.....when everything stopped.

How could we get going again?

How is church going to be changed?

And as time drew on: What if we don't have what it takes to do church in this changed world?

But, because of God we have.

- God got us going; trying new things; pivoting when we needed to.  
We did remote; we did delivery; we did online; we did drive-thru; we did outside under a tent; all to move us from a place of inertia or at least to keep us from becoming a “church at rest”

– all so that the Gospel witness could still go out.

That’s the Holy Spirit at work in us.

God made that happen in us with

- Divine power. That made us ask, “what *can* we do? How can we still accomplish our mission of being devoted to Christ; connected to others; and sent to serve?”
- Divine abilities. Preaching to a phone.....
- Divine confidence that what we did – no matter if we see if it is landing in others - is worth it.

God got us moving...and I believe that we have now what we call momentum.

Moving away from sitting in fear of loss: loss of people, loss of funding, loss of program, loss of what we had.

Moving away from a place of spiritual inertia,

Moving into what is next.

As tough as these days are to do church, what if we were to look at it this way: “We are experiencing a modern Pentecost reality.”

And we can’t ignore that.

We can’t go backward into a “woe is us, stuck in COVID; nothing will be the same again”.

We can’t pretend that nothing has happened to us...because the fact is: “the Holy Spirit has been a-working in us.”

To God be all the glory for that.