Wind and Fire Descend Upon Us May 31 , 2020 Center UMC

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| **Slides** | **Sermon** |
| 1 | Wind and Fire Descend Upon Me! Acts 2:1-15, 22-24, 32-33,36 |
| 2 | The Ascension – Luke 24:44-53  Jesus had just appeared to the disciples. They feared he was a ghost. Jesus had to show his hands and feet. He had to eat fish. And still they hardly believed it was Jesus. Then Jesus began to teach them and showed them how everything written about him in the Law of Moses and the Psalms had been fulfilled. And they understood. They understood their primary task was to preach the repentance and forgiveness of sin – starting in Jerusalem.  But they were not to start yet - - they had to go to the city and wait for God’s Holy Spirit to empower them. Then Jesus left them. |
| 3 | In one sense, I could have imagined that having lived with Jesus, heard him preach, followed him all over the countryside and now seeing him as resurrected – they would have been inspired and convicted to get out into the world and share the Good News! Yet they still seemed shell-chocked, stupefied, rather cowardly. But on their behalf, I must say the task before them was immense and they could not articulate it very well among themselves. The only thing the disciples could accomplish was choosing a replacement for Judas and that was done by casting lots! |
| 4 | They needed the power from on high if they were to take serious Jesus’ command to preach repentance and forgiveness. So, they waited for 50 days – praying and giving thanks to God. |
| 5 | On the 50th day after Easter– it was the Jewish Pentecost – the 3rd most important day of celebration in the Jewish year. Their Pentecost (50 days after the Passover) was a celebration of Moses giving the Law of God on Mt. Sinai. This celebration brought in thousands of Jews from all over the world into the city of Jerusalem. They were from strange countries – Panthia, Elam, Cappadocia, Pontus, Pamphylia, etc. And they spoke equally strange languages.  This even was an enactment of the Jewish belief that in the latter days, God would call every believer to the holy city and Israel would be finally restored as God’s Kingdom on earth. |
| 6 | So, it is no coincidence that chose this day to establish the Christian day of Pentecost. Here the birth of the Church happens in a rush of wind and with tongues of fire. |
| 7 | All the world is present to witness the power of God’s Holy Spirit as it breathes new courage into timidity, new hope into discouragement; new vision into the crucifixion clouds; new conviction into uncertainty. |
| 8 | And what was the response to this event and to Peter’s sermon?  Imagine what you would think if I preached in Spanish, or Lisa sang in French, or Tom started speaking in German, Steve, in Armenian, Marc in Chinese, Robert in Bolivian and this Robert beside me in Californian? Confusion, yes. maybe even worry! Some may call the DS to express concern!  When it happened on Pentecost well there was  **Confusion – many were awestruck, perplexed – how amazing it was for all these Galilean and Jerusalem followers of Jesus to be speaking in all the native tongues of the thousands of visitors in Jerusalem**.  Of course, some were skeptical and dismissed them as being early morning drunks.  But the important point is that: these who were timid, shellshocked, had found their tongue, they had received the power and the will to speak the revolutionary Gospel of Jesus Christ. [Recall many in the the crowd were the same ones who wanted Jesus crucified just 52 days before]  This scene from Acts 2 take on even more drama and power when you contrast it with the Tower of Babble story in Genesis. |
| 9 | Recall that story –  The **Tower of Babe** explains how our world became divided into people of different languages and how the human race got scattered over the face of the earth.  The story goes that people wanted to be like God. So, they cooperated and started to build a tower to the heavens so they could be equal to God.  Of course, when people start being God things really get all skewed and warped. So, God decided to prevent the completion of this massive tower. God send his spirit down, confuses their language so that they speak differently and can’t understand one another. And thus are forced to abandon their building and end up going off in various directions to live in groups of like languages. |
| 10 | Today, we celebrate the Holy Spirit's return by Jesus’ promise; giving the disciples different languages so that the scattered world can be brought into a unity as Christ’s followers.  Here the Holy Spirit begins the restoration of all of God’s people, no matter of race or language, no matter of variety – male, female, young, or old. Salvation and a new beginning are offered to everyone.  And not only is this offer of unity and salvation made – But also the Holy Spirit pushes Jesus’ followers out from behind the closed doors of the upper room into the marketplace, the public space, the boardroom, the classroom, the workplace, etc. to proclaim Jesus Christ. |
| 11 | In Pentecost, the church was born to share the Gospel and convince others to join the new faith community  Therefore: Today we celebrate Pentecost as a renewing of our commitment to be evangelistic missionaries for Christ.  Now don’t turn off on me yet – I know in most of our minds the terms evangelistic missionary is negative because we’ve witness lots of negative types of evangelism in the Name of Jesus. |
| 12 | EX:  1“Power Evangelism” – when in a one-on-one confrontation the most powerful personality, not Christ’s love wins.  2“Scared Saved Evangelism”- when people are terrified by hell fire and death so that they run through the doors of the church out of the world. Going to heaven is the main objective.  3“Dismembered evangelism” – that cut people off from the rest of life in order to create an artificial homogeneous community of faith – i.e.: Waco, other sects that pull people from the world to control their lives completely.  4“Prosperity Evangelism” – promise economic rewards awaiting those who become full (paying) members. The PTL (Praise the Lord)Club back in the 70s and 80s.  The Power of the Holy Spirit compels those who follow Christ to take evangelism and missionary work seriously – Those disciples on that first Pentecost were compelled and propelled out to let others know of Christ. Can we ourselves today act otherwise? |
| 13 | Lifestyle evangelism – sharing the faith by your actions and the way you live and treat others. Lifestyle evangelist quietly demonstrate in daily living the efficiency of the gospel. Actions speak louder than words! All of us know people who volunteer time at the habitat house, donate clothes to the clothes closet, help at clean up days, are part of the big brother/big sister programs, etc. Lifestyle evangelist act out the gospel |
| 14 | *As Matthew 5:16 says “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. “* |
| 15 | Reminds me of a story told by Donald Shelby:  *A monk found a very precious gemstone. He put it in his knapsack and carried it with him. One day he met a traveler in need who asked the monk to share some provisions with him. The monk opened his knapsack to share his food when his fingers found the gem. So, he lifted out the stone and gave it to the traveler.*  *Overjoyed by his good fortune in the valuable stone, the traveler went on his way. A few days later, however, the traveler caught up with the monk. He begged him again, “Please give me something more precious than this stone!” Please give me that which prompted you to give the stone to me.”* (Lifestyle Evangelism)  Transition: Lifestyle evangelism is only the first step – it sets up the opportunity for a more intentional evangelism and yet without it our words would fall on deaf ears. Lifestyle should lead to a Relational evangelism. |
| 16 | In this form of evangelism, the Christian steps outside the safety of his or her own individuality and risks being in direct relationship with another. It is only in loving people and developing relationship with them that others can be “loved into” following Christ |
| 17 | Relational evangelism is rooted in: 1 Thessalonians 2:8 – “So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.” |
| 18 | EX: There was an old missionary story about an African convert who had been given a copy of the Bible. He was enormously excited and appreciative about his ‘treasure’, which made the missionary all the more surprised when a few months later they met again and the missionary saw the condition of the Bible – worn, torn, battered, with what looked like lots of pages missing. “I thought you would have taken better care of the Bible I gave you, “ the missionary remarked. The African man replied, “It is the finest gift I ever received. It is such a wonderful gift that I gave a page to my father one to my mother and then one to everyone in the village.” |
| 19 | A relational evangelist openly shares with family and friends, not only inviting them over for dinner but also inviting them to church.  A relational evangelist offers their friends the very best they themselves have and that’s a relationship with Jesus. |
| 20 | Finally, there’s a third evangelistic called – Membership Evangelist – defined as those who re-member the dismembered. In other words, this type will seek out those lost on the margins of society and proclaim they have a home; they can have membership in God’s Kingdom. Such evangelism says that the drug addict, homeless, despairing, etc., have not been forgotten by telling them of Jesus and helping them re—find a place in society. Such people go to places like freeway underpasses on freezing nights, the cells of prisons, to neighbors in need to share Christ. |
| 21 | EX: Seminary – I served at St. Luke’s soup kitchen in Atlanta and tutored some of the kids.  Friends, we read with amazement and wonder the story of Pentecost! What would it be like to have the wind blowing wildly and forcefully in our homes and outside? I dare say most of us would think a storm is brewing and would "batten Down the hatches". What would it be like to see tongues of fire on each other's heads? It is beyond most of us to imagine that! |
| 22 | But I am convinced God wants to give us his Holy Spirit and power to be evangelists of the Gospel. And it will take the presence of the Holy Spirit to live in relationship with God through Christ and to dare to enter into relationship with those who do not know Christ and share with life and actions our love for them. |
| 23 | Conclusion:  Pentecost helps us remember our calling: To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.  Pentecost reminds us that we can’t do it alone. We need the Holy Spirit to empower us.  Pentecost reminds us that the local church is to be about evangelism, witnessing to this community for the gospel.  Every time we set foot outside our church home; our family home – we represent Christ positively or negatively! |
| 24 | God send the Pentecost Spirit, your wind and fire, upon me and all who are listening and make us powerful evangelists for Christ!  Amen. |