

Of the major Christian days, Pentecost is the one that always gets shortchanged. There's no bunny dropping candy for the kids or Santa sharing presents. I challenge you to find a Pentecost sale anywhere today other than maybe a Christian book store. People will show up for church on Easter and Christmas but Pentecost will not be a day that people will show up for church that don't come any other time during the year. It's 90 degrees outside so most folks are more focused on how to stay cool rather than being overcome by the flames of the Spirit from Pentecost.

But as we heard from the first reading today, Pentecost is the day after the resurrection when followers of Jesus were in one place. The sound of a rush of a strong wind overcame them and people who spoke different languages could understand one another. People who spoke different languages understood one another. God's Spirit helped people understand one another. But as we think about our world today, would you agree that one of the problems we all encounter is that we have a hard time understanding one another?

Think about it. If you are married or are in some type of significant relationship with someone else, what causes you the biggest problems in that relationship? Could it be that problems arise because people don't listen to understand one another? How many times have you witnessed a significant other act in such a way and you thought to yourself, "I don't understand why they did that." Or what you did makes no sense to me. Or how many times have you had your significant other say that to you? I don't understand why you reacted that way.

Or how many times have you been in a meeting at work or been involved in something at church and someone did something and you thought to yourself, "I'm really confused. I don't understand why the person did that. Or I don't understand why that person could think that."

But at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit moved in such a way that people who spoke different languages were able to understand one another. They were able to listen to understand one another.

I was talking with a colleague of mine this week and he commented that his red Pentecost stole was really more pink than red. But then he said that is probably where we in the Presbyterian Church are. We don't really fully commit to this Holy Spirit stuff. We just kind of flirt with the Holy Spirit but we don't really trust the Holy Spirit.

So would you agree with that? Do we tend to be Christians who just kind of flirt with the Holy Spirit rather than really commit to trusting God's Holy Spirit to move us? And what does it look like to really feel the winds of God's Spirit? Do we have to speak in tongues? Do we have to fall down in a worship service because we have been slain by the Spirit? Do we have to have some highly emotional and overwhelming experience? What does it feel like to really encounter the Holy Spirit?

Something intriguing about this story jumped out to me this week as I read through this passage. In this story of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did not solve the problems of the early followers. Quite the contrary. The Holy Spirit created problems for the early followers. For without Pentecost, the early followers could have gone back to their former lifestyles. They could have returned to being fishermen, tax collectors, shepherds, small business owners, and homemakers.

But because the Holy Spirit came upon them, they instead were called out. They were called out to proclaim the gospel. They were called out to teach and to heal and to witness. The Holy Spirit prevented them from going back to where they were. The Holy Spirit called them to go out to a new place. A place that would lead them to places they had never been before and my guess where they did not want to go.

So what is a challenge that the Holy Spirit may be laying out for us today? A challenge which we may not want to try to tackle? Just like the Holy Spirit led early followers who spoke different languages to understand one another, the Spirit might be calling you to work to understand someone who may be very different than you. And by coming to understand the other, it might just be a place where together you meet God.

So when you are in that argument with your spouse or significant other in your life, what would it look like if instead of trying to win the argument we tried to listen to understand the other's point of view? Doesn't mean you have to agree with what they think. But maybe in those arguments we should seek to understand why they feel as they do.

And maybe if we are able to understand the other, then at that place we may feel the winds of God's Spirit blow through that relationship. When you are in a situation at work or at church and you are at a total disagreement with the other person around whatever issue is before you, seek to try to really listen to understand the other person.

Trying to understand the other's point of view means going to a place that you don't want to go. But it may be the place that God's Spirit wants you to go. And if you and the other can come to understand why you feel as you do, then maybe that is a place where you sense the winds of God's Spirit blow through that relationship.

So maybe there is some relationship in your life where you are at a stalemate. One way to break through that stalemate is to go to that person and say, "I don't understand why you think the way you do. Please help me to understand." And maybe in that intersection where two people who have different opinions come to understand something about the other, maybe then we will feel the winds of God's Spirit blow freely in our lives.

Pentecost is the amazing story of how God's people were speaking different languages but somehow the people could understand one another. And it was through the gift of God's Holy Spirit that they could come to understand one another.

God's Holy Spirit has shown us at least once before that people who don't understand one another can be guided to understand one another. In your life, God's Holy Spirit may be working in you to do the same.

And when you come to understand the other, you may just have your own Pentecost moment when you can say without a doubt, the Holy Spirit touched me.

AMEN.

---

-Am thankful for some text observations from Lose, David, and found at [http://www.workingpreacher.org/dear\\_wp.aspx?article\\_id=481](http://www.workingpreacher.org/dear_wp.aspx?article_id=481)

-Text: Acts 2: 1-21

-Given: June 12, 2011 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)

## Prayers of the People:

God of fresh winds, we come before you hoping to be amazed by your Spirit. Breathe afresh on us and call us to a new way of being. Whether it is a gentle breeze or a violent storm, we pray that your Spirit overtakes us and leads us into a new encounter with you. Lead us into the places where you are working to create something new and exciting. Whether it is a place where two people who are at odds come together as one, or places where a group discerns together a direction that is faithful to your call, or new insights that lead to creating possibilities of ministry that do not exist, we pray for you to lead us to the places where you are creating. Even if we resist, God of new ideas, we pray that you keep reminding us of where we need to go and to trust you to provide the way for us to get where we are called to go.