

I keep my old paper calendars in my closet in my office. I keep them in there because occasionally I will have a question about something that happened in the past and I can go to my calendar and retrace the history of an event.

This is my calendar from May 2004, 9 years ago. That year Pentecost occurred on May 30th which was also Memorial Day weekend that year. Pentecost is the day on the church calendar that we celebrate 50 days after Easter. It is the day that we set aside to remember the event that Tom read in our first Scripture lesson today. According to the Scriptures, after Jesus was raised from the dead on Easter morning he returned to earth eventually and made several appearances as recorded by the gospels. He then ascended to heaven to be with God.

After his ascension, the remaining followers of Jesus returned to Jerusalem where they set about the task of figuring out how to move forward. This group of men, and women, gathered in prayer to discern what they were to do. They elected a new apostle, named Matthias, to replace Judas who had died either by suicide or by some gruesome manner. There are two accounts about how Judas died.

It is while the early Christian leaders were gathered together that the winds of the spirit blew in to their gathering. The Holy Spirit blew into their gathering and the church was begun. A church with people from many different places. A church led by the Holy Spirit to go out into the world and serve God in the wider world.

Back to my calendar. I mentioned that in 2004, Pentecost was May 30th, Memorial Day weekend. On Monday of that week, I have down in the evening that my daughter Rebecca had a softball game at 6 pm and the Preschool Board met at 7 pm. That night the Preschool board met and decided to disband the Allison Creek Preschool.

The Allison Creek Preschool was to begin in January of 2004. But when only 1 student enrolled the preschool board postponed the opening to the fall. By May 24th, the enrollment of the preschool had doubled in size. Meaning that they had only 2 students enrolled. Upon seeing the numbers, the Preschool Board prayed about it and came to the conclusion that it was not in God's plan to start a preschool at Allison Creek Presbyterian Church.

On Wednesday, the 26th, my calendar shows that I met with Renee Davis. Renee was the preschool director who was hired to begin the preschool. I met on that Wednesday to inform Renee that the preschool was being cancelled. I told her that a Session meeting was being called for the upcoming Sunday morning before worship to act on the recommendation of the preschool board. The Session was meeting on Sunday so that we could go ahead and terminate her employment.

My calendar shows another softball game for Rebecca on Thursday and a soccer game for Mary Kathryn on Saturday. On Sunday morning, I stopped at the mailbox and picked up the mail prior to coming into the parking lot. In the mailbox that day were two new applications for the Allison Creek Preschool. No one knew they were coming.

The Session met at 9:45 in the pastor's study over there to act on the request to disband the preschool. I showed them the two applications. The Session that morning decided that it was not time to give up on the preschool.

This week will be the final week of the school year for the Allison Creek Preschool. 75 families will enter the building to watch their little preschoolers sing about how Jesus loves them, about how if God made them a butterfly or an elephant what they would be like. Next week a group of adults will gather together and interview several people who have sent in resumes to serve as the next director of the preschool. She will oversee a staff of about 10 teachers. There are people here this morning who are a part of the preschool as parents or teachers or board members or who have made things for the preschool. We even have graduates.

I think it is important to share that story because it is another example of how God is in the business of resurrection. God is in the business of breathing life into places that seem to be dead. That is what Pentecost is all about. This church has proof that God believes that what happens in your life is worth investing in. Because it seems that God is invested in the lives of people here.

So what can we do to prepare ourselves for Pentecost? Do you know what the men and women were doing prior to the winds of the Spirit blowing in? They were gathered together and they were praying. Acts 1:14 says that the gathered community of followers devoted themselves to prayer.

I want to read another story from Acts this morning. The second story comes a little later in Acts. This next story occurs in a jail. If there is any place in our society that we would consider to be a place of death it would be a jail. No one wants to spend time in a jail. But we are going to read about two of Jesus' followers named Paul and Silas and what happens to them in jail. As you listen to this story, pay attention to what they are doing prior to the miracle in the story.

Read Acts 16: 16-34

Paul and Silas were in a terrible place. For their beliefs in Jesus, they were placed in a prison. They were jailed for following Jesus. But instead of giving up on God, they sang hymns and they prayed. After praying and singing hymns, the Spirit of God blew into that place and destroyed the chains of death and defeat.

I don't know if anything unique is going to happen today or this weekend in this place or where people in this church gather or in the life of your family. Designating this day as Pentecost Sunday is a human act. God is not restricted by the structures that we humans create. But I do think that Paul and Silas teach us that we are to sing and pray and worship and look for something to happen.

In many ways American worship has become a cultural thing. We can take it or leave it. We can do it or not. We can have pretty low expectations that singing and praying and worshipping makes any difference. We can invest little and expect even less.

But if we take worship for granted, I invite us to recall the story of Paul and Silas. Two guys who prayed and sang hymns and saw the lives of a family changed through them.

This church also has a story of how God's Holy Spirit chooses Pentecost to change the lives of families in this community.

I wonder if taking worship for granted is a wrong approach.

I wonder if worship, and especially worship on Pentecost, has a very important purpose. AMEN.

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