

Pentecost Sermon  
May 29, 2023  
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Today is all about the Holy Spirit, the same spirit that hovered over the water during creation.

The Spirit rested on prophets and kings as they fulfilled the will of God, and then moved on from them. Ordinary people typically did not encounter the Spirit. But the prophet Joel prophesied that God would pour out God's spirit on all flesh, and sons and daughters shall prophesy, and young men will see visions and old men shall dream dreams. Even upon slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit", God said. The Spirit would be for all.

Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit would come to them after he had left them. They were to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit's arrival.

50 days after the Passover a crowd of Jews gathered to celebrate Moses receiving the Torah, the law which united the Jewish people and gave them their identity. This festival was called Pentecost and was an annual time for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This Pentecost we read about in Acts was very different! The disciples were there too gathered to celebrate the festival when a loud sound of wind rushing in filled the house, and tongues of fire rested on each person and they began to speak in other languages. Each person heard their own language.

Amazing! Language can be exclusive or inclusive. We are normally in the majority wherever we go around the world with English. I have been out with friends who knew how to speak English but chose to speak Arabic the whole night. I felt left out, but understood why they would want to speak their native language. Hearing English in such a setting was an invitation to inclusion and participation. How left out our Spanish speaking friends must feel? Also those who are hearing

impaired must also feel left out. Imagine everyone hearing their own language being spoken. Everyone would have felt at home and able to participate with all their gifts. The sharing of gifts in community is a sign of the Spirit.

The Spirit in our lives is described in various ways. In John the Spirit is said to be like a river of living water that flows from the heart of a believer. When I think of a river, I think of life. In Egypt 99% of the population live along the Nile River on only 5% of the country's land. Even in Oregon, the highest population densities occur along the Willamette River and where major rivers come together. Rivers bring fertile soil, food and transportation. Rivers bring life.

The Spirit brings life. Just as you can tell by looking for green when a river is near, you can tell that the Spirit is active in someone's life by the fruit of their life. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

A life of relationship and intimacy with God and a life in community results from a life lived in the Spirit. One spiritual practice from Richard Foster is "palms down, palms up." (P 31)