**5/28/2023 PENTECOST SUNDAY**

**Rev. Randolph Calvo**

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.” (Ps 19:14)

1. A couple of weeks ago we were gifted great seats at Fenway. You couldn’t get any closer to the field and players. There was no one between our seats and the action on the field. When Seattle was up at bat, we could see everything, but we didn’t go to see Seattle. We went to see the Red Sox. But when they came up to bat, the bat boy came up too, and he took his position on the field. Let me show you what it looked like when the Red Sox were batting:
2. A baseball player behind a net

   Description automatically generated with medium confidence
3. Great seats. Wonderful. Can’t imagine how much they must have cost, and I appreciate them, but I could barely see homeplate. What I saw, instead, was the batboy.
4. Last Sunday we talked about how the disciples had witnessed so much from the life and miracles of Jesus, to the crucifixion and resurrection and then to the ascension, but they couldn’t see what to do with it all. They hid away in a house in Jerusalem. Never said a word. Never shared what they had witnessed with anyone. They couldn’t see the path forward.
5. That is until Pentecost. And what an amazing story it is as God opens their eyes and their new vision transforms them – and I have to say, not gently.
6. Have you ever seen those reporters who are sent out in the middle of a hurricane to tell everyone else to stay inside because it’s too dangerous to be outside? You know the sound and the ferocity of those hurricane winds that they show? That’s the imagery of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit doesn’t descend as a gentle breeze. The Bible says it was like the rush of a violent wind. The entrance of God’s Spirit is anything but subtle.
7. If you were to turn to the first page of the Bible, you would read the creation account that the wind of God covered the formless earth, then the breath of God speaks and God’s word begins the process of creation. This violent Pentecost wind is God’s second creation. It is a spiritual Big Bang. Everything is made new. Pentecost is a new way of seeing the world.
8. The second imagery of the Pentecost Spirit is fire. This is why Pentecost’s colour is red. To the ancient mind, fire was transformative. Put wood into fire and it changes. Put gold into fire and it’s refined. Combine tin and copper and the ancients created bronze – something never seen before. When the Spirit comes as fire, it is to bring change. The old is gone and the new enters. Pentecost changes everything it touches and makes new things possible.
9. Those first believers were transformed by Pentecost. They were recreated by the breath of God. Immediately, they rush out of their hiding place and onto the streets of Jerusalem, and there they speak fearlessly. For the first time they carry forward what Jesus had started, and the church is born. They can now see what they are supposed to do.
10. I think we’re accustomed to thinking that each disciple on Pentecost could speak a foreign language that they could not before, and this allows all of the religious pilgrims who have come to Jerusalem’s Temple to hear the gospel in their own tongue. It’s like the people on the street gather around the one apostle who is speaking in their native tongue.
11. But Pentecost tells us something even more astounding than this. We read today “each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.” This means that they heard all of the disciples speaking about Jesus, not just the particular disciple gifted with their particular language.
12. In some miraculous way, what the New Testament calls the gift of tongues, a universal, spiritual language is both spoken by the believers and heard by the people on the street. This reverses the separation from that Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel where the people of the world were divided into separate groups. Instead, the Pentecost Spirit draws people together.

1. This gift of hearing is one of the most wildly incredible gifts of Pentecost. The apostles who are speaking are believers, but the ones who hear and understand that mystical, universal language are not believers. Some on the street, we’re told, heard only what they thought to be drunken gibberish. Others, though, heard the gospel. This means that the same Pentecost Spirit that inspired the apostles to preach was inspiring some of those on the street so that they could hear. Some were touched by the Spirit, but they had not yet realized it.
2. Think about what this means. The Spirit was shared with believers and non-believers alike. The Spirit, like that hurricane wind we talked about, was not confined to going where we thought the Spirit should go. The Spirit went where the Spirit decided to go.
3. We have no idea why some heard drunken babel while others heard the gospel, but we know that the Spirit goes where the Spirit chooses. This is an all-important lesson for believers and especially for the church. It should keep us humble and receptive to unexpected and challenging revelations.
4. We don’t hold a monopoly on the Spirit. Sometimes the Spirit goes ahead of us and it is our calling to follow. Sometimes the Spirit speaks outside of believers and the church. Sometimes we need to be prodded by what the Spirit is revealing through others.
5. The Pentecost Spirit is without boundaries. It is uncontrollable. And this is part of the power and wonder of Pentecost. Where is the Spirit leading us? And by us, I mean everyone. Think about what Peter preaches on Pentecost when he quotes the Prophet Joel.
6. This was an era when authority was strictly cordoned off and limited to men of age, but the Pentecost Spirit revels in it being shared with male and female – “your sons and daughters shall prophesy,” shared with everyone from youth to the elderly – “your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams,” and shared also with the disenfranchised – “even upon my slaves … I will pour out my Spirit.” This is about as inclusive a statement as you’ll find anywhere in the Bible. The Spirit reveals our equality before God. This was a radical revelation then, and it still is today.
7. What will Pentecost mean to us, to each of us, to all of us, today? On this birthday of the Christian Church, how will Pentecost renew our church today? How will Pentecost help us to see more clearly today? How will we share Jesus today? How will we be open to having others share the Spirit’s inspiration with us?
8. Pentecost celebrates the presence of the Spirit among us now and everywhere. May we trust that this is true and may we allow Pentecost’s power to work within us and among us and through us. And for this we pray in Jesus’ name on this holy day of Pentecost. Amen.