

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Bible Study on 5.27.2020

Opening Question: How have you seen the Holy Spirit at work over the past few weeks?

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-23

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

What sticks out to you from this text? (Aside from the fact that it is the beginning of the Doubting Thomas Text that we read just a few weeks back!)

In the beginning of John the baptizer states that Jesus is "the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (1:33) and that is what is being fulfilled here in John 20. What does it mean to you to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?

Jesus gives them a new kind of peace...and then sends them out. What do you think he was talking about here? What kind of peace is this? Where is Jesus sending them?

What does this mean for us? How does this peace come upon us? Where or how do we experience it? What does it mean for us to be sent out? What about in this time of a global pandemic? How are we sent out as the Body of Christ being baptized in the Holy Spirit?

Looking at verse 23 we are often taken back by the awkward power that seems to be granted to followers of Christ or by the Church. This seeming ability to hold sin over those who wrong us. But in Johannine Theology (Study of God as understood through the Gospel of John) Sin is about absence of or restriction from relationship with God. Retaining sins would be to hold you and that person from authentic relationship with one another and from God...whereas, forgiving or setting free means to open relationship with one another and with God.

Have you ever held a grudge? How has that worked out? What does it do to the other person? What does it do to you? How is God able to work in that? How do we overcome such obstacles as holding grudges or retaining the sins of others? Is it an obstacle?

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. 5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and

visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20 The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. 21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

An important note here that Pentecost is a Jewish feast holiday that comes 50 days after Passover, it is a festival of gathering of harvest and the first fruits. The people gathered here were from all over the world but they are all devout Jews as is stated in verse 5. So, they were gathered together in this place for a reason before the Holy Spirit came upon them.

What sticks out to you about this text?

When you think of the Holy Spirit what comes to mind?

How would you have felt being one of the apostles experiencing the Holy Spirit come upon you in this way?
How do you experience the Holy Spirit in your life today?

In a commentary I read about when they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability it was less about the speaking and more about those who heard understanding. It was the gift of listening, of hearing, of understanding. What does it mean to you to be understood? How does it feel to be truly heard? Why do you think it was/is important for the Gospel to not just be spoken but understood and heard? Does it make a difference if we proclaim the Gospel for the purpose of proclaiming it verse the purpose of having it understood? How do you see one or the other lived out in our world?

Peter's sermon is reminding us of a promise that God made through the prophet Joel as he proclaims the words from Joel 2:28. What do each of these aspects of the Spirit seem to you in verses 17-21? How do you see them lived out in our world today?

How do we live out this Spirit filled faith in light of a global pandemic? Pentecost is about God's invitation to us to engage with the promises God has made and as a part of God's continued creation. How do you see us as a part of that today?