

TIME TO OWN IT

John 14:8-17, 25-27

Intro

This morning's opening passage acts as the preface to the experience that we will be reminded of momentarily in the book of Acts. Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit. He talked about Her with his friends, with his disciples. This doesn't mean that they had a clue as to what they were hearing...but it's out there. The scripture reads this way.

John 14:8-17, 25-27

8 Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.'⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"?'¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

¹⁵ 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

²⁵ 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you.²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Acts 2:1-21

Intro

Today is Pentecost. This is the day when the believers in Jesus as the resurrected Son of God, became something else: they became the Church of Jesus Christ.

As the Church, as those who had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were empowered to go forth into the world and do as their master had declared to them, as articulated in the Gospel of Matthew, to "Go and make disciples of all nations, ...teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded." This empowerment of the Holy Spirit was given to each and every person present: man, woman, and child; young and old; rich and poor. The responsibility to lean upon this divine strength was required of all of them, even in those days when they questioned whether or not they had anything left to give.

Pentecost, as has been mentioned before, is not and should not just be a 'birthday celebration'. It should be a call to arms that what we have been called to as the church is something that is more than us, more than our wants and desires, more than our fears and reservations, more than our questions and doubts. Pentecost, with its unbelievable story of a great wind, tongues as of fire, and languages of

every nation being spoken, is the church's reminder that with and through God, all things are possible, even the impossible. The scripture reads this way.

Acts 2:1-21

2When the day of Pentecost had come; they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All 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. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³But 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. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, 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."

"Time to Own It"

What do you believe it is possible for God to do? Today. In the here and now. What do you believe it is possible for God to do in the world around us; in the lives of those whom you know; in your life?

Think about it for a second.

A lot of people, in an almost second nature sort of way, say that God can do all things. And at some level, I think that belief is real...in regard to how it relates to other people ...somewhere over there. Or maybe even folks that you know.

But there seems to be that cut off valve when it comes to our own lives.

You take that basic level of thought and step into a service like this one, where we celebrate the movement of the Spirit of God in a new and fresh way, and what you end up having is this feeling of disconnect. Miraculous Spirit moves in the world, but not necessarily in my world, let alone like that.

Maybe that's one of the reasons why Pentecost tends to feel like an afterthought for so many Christians and absolutely the mainline church. Yeah, I know that Pentecost tends to fall right around Memorial

Day, so at least in the United States, what are more folks thinking about? They're getting ready for heading outside and enjoying the nicer weather.

But it's more than that. Christmas is palatable because we celebrate how the Spirit of God worked through that young family so that a savior might be born. It happened over there ..to Mary and Joseph, and yes we ultimately receive the benefit, but the ownership level is small.

At Easter, the Spirit of God moves so that the resurrection of the one who died without sin might take place. But again, it happens to Jesus. And it isn't as if we were the ones who first born witness to that truth. So it's over there, something that we can celebrate, but something that is not ours to specifically carry.

Then Pentecost shows up. It's different.

Yes, I suppose that we can just celebrate what happened, but when Peter says, "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. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.", that should act as a call that the gifts of the Spirit are not just trapped in some story long ago, or in some charismatic community that has existed maybe a few decades as opposed to our denomination which has been in existence for closing in on 400 years.

No, what this passage proclaims is that all people will have the Spirit of God come upon them. There should be a level of expectation that God is and will be at work in each of our lives.

Then, as the people who we are, people whom have been called to be as believers in the risen Christ, we should look forward to the responsibilities that come with the Spirit of God being at work in our lives.

I get that the examples that are used in the passage cause many of us to go, "um...no. Not happening. Speaking in tongues, having visions, prophesying: that's not my life." I get that. I do.

But what we are able to hear through the lists that the Apostle Paul puts together for us (in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4) is that the gifts of the Spirit are diverse. Listen to these (with a short description as needed!) and realize that there is a place that you are represented in this list. But are you going to own it?

Apostle: The title means "a messenger, one sent forth with orders". For the most part is thought of as those individuals who were the first leaders of the Church; they were commissioned by Jesus to initiate and direct the preaching of the gospel.

Prophecy: this is "reporting something that God spontaneously brings to your mind".

Evangelism: The gift used by those who devote themselves to preaching the gospel.

Pastoring: This term derives from a Greek word for "shepherd". Pastors are gifted to lead, guide, and set an example for other Christians.

Teaching: Someone who devotes his or her life to preaching and teaching the Christian faith.

Service and leading: Since there are many types of ministries and service to the Church, this then describes a broad array of gifts rather than a single gift. For example, the gift of Helps which has to do with service to the sick and the poor. Or administration which is the God-given capacity to lead or guide the Church through storms and difficult seas.

Exhortation: The ability to motivate Christians "to patient endurance, brotherly love, and good works"

Giving: Those with this gift share their own possessions with others with extraordinary generosity.

Mercy: the mercy-shower possesses a ministry of visitation, prayer, and compassion to the poor and sick.

Faith: This refers to that strong or special faith "which removes mountains, casts out devils (Matthew 17:19,20), and faces the most cruel martyrdom without flinching".

Gifts of healings: The ability to supernaturally minister healing to others.

Working of miracles: The performance of deeds beyond ordinary human ability by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Discerning of spirits: The capacity to discern, distinguish, or to discriminate the source of a spiritual manifestation—whether it emanates from God or not.

Tongues: The supernatural ability of speaking an unlearned language.

Interpretation of tongues: This gift always follows the public exercise of the gift of tongues.

The gifts of the Spirit are diverse, and they are distributed to each of us in unique ways. Each of us, all of us, if we are willing to own the fact that we have been blessed by God in such a way, and not only blessed but empowered to go out and use those gifts of the Spirit, have the obligation to own those gifts for in owning them, we will allow God's name to be praised.

Here's another way of saying it, that individuals of the mainline denominations and absolutely those folks of the Reformed persuasion need to claim that which is theirs: that the Spirit of God is still very much at work; that the unbelievable is not merely contained in the pages of God's Word or in some of remote corner of Christendom, but with us today; and that each of us who have been led to place our faith in the one who is named Jesus have been blessed with gifts of the Spirit that allow God to come into our present reality in very tangible ways.

But are we going to own that? On this Pentecost Sunday are we going to merely recognize what happened back then...or are we going to celebrate how that same Spirit continues to be at work today? That list that I went through, you are represented on that list. You may not see it, but it's true. Do not succumb to the voices of doubt and disbelief that say you are anything less than a child of God who has been so richly blessed that you know (you know!) in whom all your days are held.

Will there be those days and those occasions when we don't know what to say, when we don't know how to act?

Yes!

But that doesn't mean that we don't know where to turn for when we turn back to God then the Spirit begins to remind us that the things that we do, the words that we say, are not our own: they are of God. Maybe it will be during those times when we feel completely inadequate, completely weak, completely unable to do that which we know to be of God, that the Holy Spirit will be able to fill us and strengthen us and through that filling, allow us to be able to be that light which God would have us be.

That is who we have been blessed to be! It says so, right in the scriptures: "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. Upon both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit."

Those days are here. We are those people. Don't doubt it; expect it; own it!

Now, with that reassurance, let us go out and serve the God that has called us. Let us use the gifts of God's Spirit, let us own them, and through that ownership begin to plant the seeds that will make disciples of all nations.

After Sermon Prayer

God, this Pentecost Sunday, allow us to feel Your Holy Spirit moving in our lives as it has for people throughout all time. Strengthen us and allow us to realize and believe that we do not go alone. We go with the Spirit and that Spirit will speak for us in ways that are too deep for words when we feel that we do not know what to say or where to turn. God, fill us. Amen.