

Goal: That the hearers would trust in the power of the Holy Spirit working in them.

I love Pentecost! What was once was a Jewish celebration of the harvest ([Numbers 16:9-11](#)), similar to our Thanksgiving Day, but with a more religious tone, changed into a celebration of the Holy Spirit! Now, it's a celebration of God's Spirit powerfully pointing the world to Jesus. Imagine if you had been there that day in Jerusalem. Imagine if you had been one of Jesus' disciples. I mean the past 3 years had been pretty great. Being with Jesus, watching Him heal the sick, give sight to the blind, even raise the dead. But the last couple of months had left them confused of what to do.

Seven weeks earlier, they watched as Jesus was arrested by His own people, handed over to the Romans, beaten, whipped, and ultimately killed by means of a cross. Three days later, He rose from the dead and He was alive. For the next few weeks, Jesus spent time with His disciples, eating, teaching, walking with them, until He was taken into Heaven. Oh, to be with the risen Jesus was probably pretty awesome. But now what do they do? Well, they do what He said, *"wait in Jerusalem."* (***"You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."*** (Luke 24: 48 – 49)

I hate waiting! Patience is not one of my strengths. Is there anyone here who likes to wait? I mean, when you're waiting for something you know, like for a parent to return from a trip to the mainland or for the opening of birthday gifts, you can get excited and eager, even checking your watch to see how much longer. But here, Jesus doesn't give them a time or a day or even tell them what it is exactly they are waiting for. He just says, *"Wait until you are clothed with power from on high."*

I'd imagine that for the first few days, the disciples were looking into the skies and out over the horizon for any signs. They were probably talking a lot about things that happened and wondering what things meant. After a week, worry may have started setting in as they worried that they might have missed it. Maybe a few of them started making plans in case they did miss it. Peter, Andrew, James, and John considered going back to the fishing business. Others may have been thought about going home to their families. Impatience can lead us to find our own answers, create our own solutions, seek our own conclusions. Impatience can lead us to follow our plans, not God's.

Suddenly, there a mighty rushing wind filled the house and flames of fire danced around landing upon each disciple. (***"Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."*** (Acts 2: 2 – 4) And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began

speaking in all these different languages of those who were gathered in Jerusalem, that none of them had ever heard or learned before. This was obviously God's plan and the Spirit's power, just as Jesus promised, to bring the Gospel to the world.

Now, how in the world could these disciples do this? They couldn't, but God could. If you were to ask them the day before what their 5 and 10-year plans were, I doubt this would have been on their radar. But God had a plan to work through them.

Now, what's funny is that the devout Jews that were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate this religious holiday didn't grasp that this was God's Kingdom at work. But it wasn't like when He parted the Red Sea or came down on Mount Sinai. But remember, God always does things new. So, they began to criticize what they saw, "*they're drunk*"! Often, when God works in ways that don't fit our expectations or that make us uncomfortable, we're quick to criticize. Why? Well, if I am being honest, we want control. We want things our way. I know that I struggle with this. When I'm not in control or things are not going according to my plans, my first thought is to criticize it. It's easier to knock it down than for me to accept the fact that I am not in control, or better yet, that I am not needed.

This has been a hard lesson through PLI ([Pastoral Leadership Institute](#)) training. As a pastoral leader, I think so much depends on me, my vision, my goals, my ideas. But PLI has emphasized a word over and over again for ministry leaders to heed, the word repent (*Metanioatae*). Often, repenting is misunderstood as being sorry for something or turning away from a sin. But repentance in the Biblical understanding is a changing of one's worldview, their mindset. ("*Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'*" *(Mark 1: 14 – 15)*) Repenting means a change from what you've been accustomed, whether it's good or bad, and believing in what God is doing now for His kingdom. That means trusting that God is in control and the Holy Spirit is working, rather than placing our hope and trust in programs or buildings or business practices. And God's ways don't usually make sense, but His ways is the only ones that can save souls.

Last weekend, at our district convention, that theme echoed, encouraging us to change our conditioned and comfortable ways of doing things and to wrestle with what Christ will do through us and our district. The focus was on the words of the disciples that first Easter on their walk to Emmaus, when they realized, "*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?*" (*Luke 24: 32*) They had lived with Jesus, listened to Him, believed in Him, but they still couldn't wrap their minds around all that God was doing. Their hearts burned within them, their minds raced to understand as Jesus shifted their mindset and explained all through the Law and the Prophets. Then, Jesus promises that He will send them the Holy Spirit Who will continue to reveal all things to them and keep leading them to repentance.

Peter is a great example of one whose mindset God changed dramatically, but not overnight. The fisherman was called to be a fisher of men. He was the confessor, “*You are the Christ*”, but moments would be called Satan. He led the way for Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, but days abandoned Him and denied even knowing Christ. Today we hear Peter the mighty preacher of God’s kingdom. Now, when I reflect on Peter’s life it’s obvious, when he relied on his way of thinking, he was a friend of the world and things went bad in God’s kingdom, but when he relied on God’s Spirit, the kingdom multiplied. Might we learn from Peter, to trust less in ourselves and more in God’s Spirit?

Often, I feel like Peter. It’s taken me many years to realize that I’m not in control, that it’s not my vision, that it’s not my abilities, but it’s always God’s Spirit. Two weeks ago, our confirmands share that same realization. So this Day of Pentecost, I want to ask you, is it you or is it God? Do you find yourself getting impatient and frustrated because things are not going as you like or because you’re not feeling in control? That’s probably a good thing, because God is working to change your mindset. The Holy Spirit is working on you to bring you to repentance so that He might do mighty acts through you.

I love Pentecost because everything about this day points us to the Holy Spirit and what He does in us. He creates faith in us, He gives us new birth, He gives us eternal life, He makes us Christ’s disciples, and He moves and breathes and speaks through us every day, making us to be light to the nations and salt to the earth. And it’s that same Spirit, Who was hovering over the waters at Creation, Who led Abraham to a foreign land, Who led Israel out of Egypt, Who spoke through the prophets, and revealed Himself in the wind and fire on Pentecost, Who continues to live powerfully through you and me.

This Pentecost, I want to encourage you to hear the Spirit’s continued call to repent, to change your mindset, to give up control to God and to trust in His kingdom and His righteousness. Don’t put your hope in programs or buildings or in people, for none of them offer salvation. Simply believe that the Holy Spirit is working among you and through you to connect others to salvation in Jesus Christ alone.

As you go out, trust that the Spirit will give you the right words and the right time and in the right language so that you might share Christ’s Gospel in order to save many. One of our confirmands chose a verse I think is perfect for us as well. They quoted John the Baptist, saying, “***he must increase and I must decrease.***” (***John 3: 30***) That is how God shows His glory and not ours. May the Lord bless you in the journey ahead. It may seem scary, to give up control and to simply believe, but I can assure you that it is at those times that God Kingdom is truly at work among us. Live in the Spirit to the glory of Jesus Christ and for the love of others. Amen.