

## SPEAKING IN NEW WAYS

5/31/20 ~ St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Encinitas, CA (*Livestreamed*)

Pentecost (A): Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:25-35, 37; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 7:37-39

Come, Holy Spirit. Take our lips and speak through them; take our minds and think with them; take our hearts and set them on fire, in the name of the Holy Trinity. Amen.

The ongoing violence in our world continues to shock me. I always want to believe that we are improving as a society, and that we have moved past racism, oppression, and other social injustices. But it just keeps happening! It's heartbreaking that we, as a global community, can't seem to understand how much better it would be for all of us, if we all worked together.

At the same time, it often seems pointless for me, as your spiritual leader, to preach to you about these things. I have this idea—and I don't think I'm wrong—that most of us, here at St. Andrew's, get it. We have outreach programs and committees like the Faith in Action that are all about helping overcome the injustices of the world, in the small ways we can. I'm sure you're all teaching your children that racism, sexism, ageism and all the other 'isms' are wrong, and that we must be vigilant to overturn the systems that perpetuate them.

On the other hand, we do live in a bit of a bubble, up here in North County. While we might see the challenges our siblings in Christ battle by having to live in on the street or in their car here in Encinitas, it's nothing on the scale of the situation down in San Diego, or some of those outlying urban areas.

I feel frustrated that we don't have a broader platform to affect the choices and options of more people to help reduce the violence in our world. And, yet, I was stirred by a quote I came across this week. It's from a book by Joan Chittister, who is a Benedictine nun committed to social justice. Her words made me remember that there's always room to look within and see what might need to shift. She wrote: "Whatever is the most other, most unlike thing, in my life is exactly what I need to get to know. After all," she says, "it represents the part of me that has yet to be developed."

In fact, all the "isms" of the world are essentially grounded in that which we don't know or don't understand. When something, or someone, is different from

our experience of the world, human tendency is to decide that other way is the wrong way to do or be in the world, and a prejudice is developed without ever having considered a response of curiosity instead of one that's defensive or judgmental.

Which is where, on our faith journeys, we might welcome in the Holy Spirit. Today's reading from Acts points to the fierceness and power of the wind. The wind is a force to be reckoned with. The wind—that is the Holy Spirit—will take us where she will.

At the same time, in our Pentecost story, we learn that the movement of the Holy Spirit is a great equalizer. Everyone gathered hears the word of God in their own native language. In other words, they are able to actually take in the message of God's Good News in new ways, even though they had previously not been able to understand.

I bet almost every one of us could tell a story about being in the midst of a ferocious windstorm. It can be scary and it's almost always risky business. Wind can be rough to bear; it can have a drying effect, leaving us parched; wind isn't always something we step readily out into.

Maybe that's why John's version of the Holy Spirit is more appealing to some of us. John's version becomes an antidote to the parchiness, as the Holy Spirit is described as Living Waters that will quench our thirst. And aren't we all thirsty?

We are dried up from the wind that blew us into a pandemic crisis. We're dried up from worrying about droplets in the air that could get us, or our loved ones, deathly ill. And we're dried up listening to yet more horrific attacks on Black people, or acts of violence against Asian people just because of their skin color. We're dried up as we learn about the social injustice of people in lower-economic situations not getting the healthcare they need in this crisis.

So, Living Water is something I just want to dive down deep into. Jesus says, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me." The Living Water Jesus talks about is a hope-filled promise that allows us to both give and receive the sustenance we all need. I believe that's why these passages is tied to the Day of Pentecost. The reading from Acts and John are both messages about the ways we can find unity

in diversity. Many bodies of water flow into one large ocean, and, yet, they are, in the end, all water.

Either way we consider the Holy Spirit—as a blowing wind or living water—there is no escaping that there's movement involved. The Holy Spirit will take us where we weren't expecting or planning to go, so it's natural to experience some fear about going to those unknown places, and it's natural that we will mourn that which we'll have to leave behind.

At the same time, there is hope and promise to counteract our fear and mourning. As we give ourselves over to the movement of the Holy Spirit, our thirst will be quenched. So, this week, as we move throughout our days, may we remember that the Holy Spirit doesn't live in the confines of our individual souls, but lives within our interactions with others. May we learn to speak in new ways that allow others to hear God's Good News even though they previously misunderstood .

-AMEN

### **The Collect**

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **Acts 2:1-21**

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in one place. 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. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and

Arabs-- in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

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. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: `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. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' "

### **Psalm 104:25-35, 37**

25 O LORD, how manifold are your works! \* in wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 26 Yonder is the great and wide sea with its living things too many to number, \* creatures both small and great. 27 There move the ships, and there is that Leviathan, \* which you have made for the sport of it. 28 All of them look to you \* to give them their food in due season. 29 You give it to them; they gather it; \* you open your hand, and they are filled with good things. 30 You hide your face, and they are terrified; \* you take away their breath, and they die and return to their dust. 31 You send forth your Spirit, and they are created; \* and so you renew the face of the earth. 32 May the glory of the LORD endure for ever; \* may the LORD rejoice in all his works. 33 He looks at the earth and it trembles; \* he touches the mountains and they smoke. 34 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; \* I will praise my God while I have my being. 35 May these words of mine please him; \* I will rejoice in the LORD. 37 Bless the LORD, O my soul. \* Hallelujah!

### **1 Corinthians 12:3b-13**

No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all

baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

**John 7:37-39**

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.