

Weekend of Sunday, June 5, 2022

Day of Pentecost /Year C

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

Second Reading: Romans 8:14-17

Gospel Reading: John 14:8-17[25-27]

Sermon Title: “Led by the Spirit of God”

Theme

On Pentecost, we celebrate that we have been given an Advocate to accompany us. Poured out in wind and fire, water, wine, and bread, the Holy Spirit abides in and among us. We give thanks that God speaks to each of us, no matter our origins, language, or life path. Filled with the Spirit of truth, we go out from worship to proclaim the saving power of Christ’s love and the freedom of God’s grace with all the world.

Texts

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] 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.

⁵Now 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.”

¹⁴But 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.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' ”

First Reading (alternate): Genesis 11:1-9

¹Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ²And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” ⁵The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. ⁶And the LORD said, “Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.” ⁸So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Second Reading: Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Gospel: John 14:8-17 [25-27]

⁸Philip said to [Jesus,] “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹Jesus 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’? ¹⁰Do 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. ¹¹Believe 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. ¹²Very 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. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. ¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This 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. ²⁶But 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. ²⁷Peace 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.”]

Sermon

I will get to the conclusion and title of this sermon, "*Led by the Spirit of God*" in a few moments, but to get there, we have to start at the beginning. The beginning, being the oldest of the three readings, which is the Gospel according to John.

The reading comes from John 14 and yes, we were in John 18 just last weekend. Why is that? Because today is the Day of Pentecost, a festival day, so the lectionary editors have departed from a linear reading of John's Gospel. However, the context is still Jesus's Farewell Discourse, that long four-chapter talk that Jesus had with his disciples. If you have a red-letter edition of the Bible, you would notice that from chapter 14 through chapter 17, the text is almost entirely red, meaning that those words in red are spoken by Jesus. In this passage,

- Jesus told them he was leaving them to go to a place they cannot yet go, but in time they will be able to follow;
- Thomas spoke up and said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?"
- Jesus answered, sort of, when he said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

The very next verse is the first verse of today's Gospel Reading:

⁸Philip said to [Jesus,] "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?"

It must have been exhausting for Jesus. The weight of what awaited him must have been nearly unbearable, and then Philip proved that he needed remedial disciple school.

Jumping ahead to verse 15ff, Jesus gave his disciples a conditional statement. He said

¹⁵"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

So the proof of the disciple's love is commandment keeping. In other words, 'Don't say you love me. Show me, by honoring the example I have laid before you.' And if they do that, something else will happen. Jesus said,

¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This 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.

So Jesus will ask the Father to give his faithful disciples, the Advocate, the Paraclete, the one we spoke of a couple of weeks ago. Jesus also called it the Spirit of truth here, meaning that it will guide the disciples in both knowing the truth and telling the truth as they begin their journeys as apostles. Jesus said that the world, those who are not his disciples, followers, and believers, cannot receive the Advocate, because they cannot see it or know it, but it already abides in them, his disciples.

And then Jesus said,

²⁵“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But 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. ²⁷Peace 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.”

End of story. After chapter 14, Jesus said, "Rise, let us be on our way."

So the disciples have been through the most bizarre night of their lives with Jesus. But it will get worse. Just as he predicted, their friend and Lord was arrested, interrogated, tortured, and crucified.

Moving on to the First Reading from Acts, the Day of Pentecost comes 50 days after the first day of Passover, hence the prefix "pente". Pentecost was another pilgrimage festival of the Jews, so the holy city of Jerusalem was again full of pilgrims making their pilgrimage to celebrate the harvest. The growing season must be different in the Middle East than here, but I digress.

This Advocate, the Holy Spirit took advantage of the city being full of Jews to blow into action, and I mean blow. The apostles were still cowering behind closed doors on order from the Lord.

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.

The experience of this "violent wind" wasn't limited to those in the room. The crowd outside in Jerusalem heard it too and wondered what had happened. They noticed that this group of men began preaching, each in the language of the listeners. And then Peter, the same guy who had a knack for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, began preaching, and it was glorious. He explained what was going on, and he was articulate, eloquent, and coherent – like he had never been before.

"What is going on here?" all of them must have been thinking – apostles and Judeans alike.

It would take years for them to grow in their understanding of what had happened to them, and I doubt they ever fully knew, just as we never fully know. And that is the point. They, the apostles, and then all the new disciples that have come to belief because of their ministry, became "Led by the Spirit of God."

That very expression, "Led by the Spirit of God," came from Paul's letter to the Romans, which is our Second Reading. The original eleven apostles plus Matthias, Judas' replacement, muddled along trying to figure out their new roles for perhaps, four to seven years before the conversion of Paul. Remember, as Saul, he persecuted the Christians. But then after his dramatic conversion, he became the apostle to the Gentiles. And in his letter to the Romans, Paul encouraged their young faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Make no mistake about it, it was difficult to be a Christian in those days. All those Christians were something else before their conversion to Christianity, and that likely put them at odds with their families, friends, and community. But Paul

reminded them that they will not be left alone to fend for themselves without hope. He wrote,

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God *are children of God*. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.

The world has never known a relationship with a deity like this before. Not only are we the creation of God, but by our belief in God's Son, Jesus Christ, we have been given what Paul called a "spirit of adoption" and he juxtapositioned it against a "spirit of slavery." What is the difference? I'm so glad you asked.

What Paul called the "spirit of slavery" is how the world, including the Jews, operated until Christ. They were bound to an endless attempt to placate their god's anger and favor with sacrifices, law-keeping, incantations, and worship.

But Jesus Christ came along and taught the true nature of his heavenly Father. He taught that while God was pleased with the devotion of his faithful followers, God is love and grace, more willing to forgive our sins than we are to ask, and without the offering of the blood of animals - Jesus himself put an end to the sacrificial system.

Furthermore, though all people are the creation of God, those who call Jesus Lord of their lives and are therefore led by his Spirit, are children of God by adoption.

I've only known a few wealthy people in my life, but I admit fantasizing about what it would be like to be adopted as their child. I fantasized about having access to all their wealth and toys. Imagine being adopted as a child of the creator of the universe – because that is what we are.

¹⁷heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ

This weekend we will celebrate the confirmation of three of our youth. Just so we are all on the same page about what confirmation is, all three of these children were baptized as babies. Baptism is what God calls all people to. Parents, who themselves are "children of God" respond in faith and come to baptism for their children. They all think they are making a decision to get their child baptized, but what the church says happens is that through faith, they respond affirmatively to the

call of the Spirit of the living God who wants baptism for their child. So they bring them to the church for baptism, this one or another, and the children have nothing to say about it. We, the church, and the parents commit to raising the child in the faith.

The parents of our confirmands, Pat & Kim Chaplow, Carolyn Jennings, and Sarah Michaliszyn have done what was asked according to the covenant of baptism. For the last two years, I have condensed Confirmation to a one-year, every-week intensive program. And let me tell you, during a pandemic, it has not been easy, but we got through it. And today is the day that Daniel Chaplow, Malena Jennings, and Riley Michaliszyn will get to claim the Christian faith modeled by their parents and taught by the church as their own.

Danny, Malena, and Riley will decide for themselves what to do with their lives of faith from this day forward. God loves them enough to let them decide – they can even decide to walk away. But if they decide that the Christian faith modeled by their parents and taught by the church is for them, then they should expect to be led by the Spirit of God, because it will not let them flounder.

Raisin' the Bar Challenge

For all the rest of us, the Church takes advantage of these special occasions known as *affirmations of baptism*, to affirm our baptisms. In a moment, we will say the words of the Apostle's Creed. We should ask ourselves, do I still believe:

- that God is my "Abba" Father;
- that he loves me enough to allow his own Son to die for my sins;
- and that Jesus Christ is God's model for faithful living?

If you do, then you too are "children of God" and the proof of that will be keeping his commandments. And remember, we are not left alone to fend for ourselves. We have the Spirit of God to teach us everything and remind us of all that the Lord Jesus taught us, so that we may indeed have the peace he leaves us.

Prayer

God of love and grace, continue to send your Holy Spirit to abide in our lives so that we are encouraged to love and serve you and your creation. And give us the true joy and peace that you offer to those who follow the example of your Son and Our Lord Jesus. It is in his name we pray. Amen