**Weekend of Sunday, August 28, 2023**

**The Day of Pentecost/Lectionary X/Year A**

**First Reading: Acts 2:1-21**

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13**

**Gospel Reading: John 7:37-39**

**Sermon Title: *“Stir Up in Us the Gift of the Holy Spirit”***

**Theme**

*Pentecost derives its name from the Jewish festival celebrating the harvest and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai fifty days after Passover. Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the Holy Spirit as God’s presence within and among us. In Acts the Spirit arrives in rushing wind and flame, bringing God’s presence to all people. Paul reminds us that though we each have different capacities, we are unified in the Spirit that equips us with these gifts. Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples, empowering them to forgive sin. We celebrate that we too are given the breath of the Holy Spirit and sent out to proclaim God’s redeeming love to 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.’ ”

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13**

3bNo one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.  
 4Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10to 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. 11All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.  
  
 12For 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. 13For 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.

**Gospel: John 20:19-23**

19When 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.” 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

**Sermon**

We skipped the First Reading for today. It is the Acts 2 reading which is the dramatic coming of the Holy Spirit that arrived like a mighty wind. Luke used the word "violent" to describe it. It blew the doors and windows of that upper room wide open and compelled the apostles to go out from the safety of that room and into the marketplace of Jerusalem where Jews from all over the known world had gathered for the festival.

Then Luke wrote,

2:4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

I suspect it was a combination of dynamic preaching, amazing communication in all the languages of the gathered people, and the Holy Spirit's pre-influencing of the hearts of the listeners, but as we learn later, many were “cut to the heart by Peter’s testimony, and as many as three-thousand were baptized that day!

Wow! What a story! And from those humble beginnings, the church was born. And if it wasn't true and Holy Spirit inspired, do you think for a moment we would be here today?

There is a point to the celebration of the Day of Pentecost that is germane to these nine young folks sitting in the front row. Most of them were baptized as infants, as we Lutherans like to do. However, this year, we are also confirming three young adults who were just baptized earlier this year.

Theologically speaking, after the dispensing of the water of baptism, when the presider puts his or her hands on the heads of the baptized, he or she says,

Sustain *name* with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.

Then the presiding minister marks the sign of the cross on the forehead of each of the baptized and says:

*Name*, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

That is the moment, theologically speaking, that the church says you have been given all you need to live out your lives of discipleship. Now go and do what the Spirit calls you to do.

Again, in the Lutheran tradition, when a baby is baptized, the parents and sponsors enter into a covenant agreement to raise their child in the faith. Nothing is asked of the child. Their only responsibility is to obey the Fourth Commandment which is "Honor your Father and Mother" by obediently going to Church, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and Catechism classes … until confirmation.

And then, on this day, Confirmation Day, the parent's responsibility is complete. Oh, you still have to be parents, but as far as the covenant you made with the church goes, your job is complete. Congratulations!

In a few moments, these young folks will stand up before God and everybody and claim the Christian faith as their own. Your confession of faith needs to have integrity, in other words, say it like you mean it.

Now listen carefully, many make the mistake of thinking that *confirmation* *is graduation* from church. "I never have to go there again!" It is not true, and let me say that when that happens, it is a waste of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Confirmation means that the church agrees with you that you do indeed believe. Then, after you have publicly proclaimed your belief, it is time for you to take on greater responsibility for your life of discipleship.

I know the families you come from and I know that if you said, "Mom, Dad, I want to be an Assisting Minister, or a Communion Assistant, or a Sunday School Teacher," or whatever the ministry opportunity you might choose, they will support you.

Zion is a big-ish church. There are a lot of people who help make it what it is. While I was preparing this sermon, Michael Bundy was here putting the flower displays together. Why do I mention that? Because being creative and having an eye for beautiful things is one of Michael's spiritual gifts, and none of you would know who did that if I didn't tell you.

Keith and Karen Kuppler and Rodney and Mary Beth Bowyer took time to put up all those banners – it's more difficult than it looks. That's not really a spiritual gift per se, but their willing spirit is.

MJ and Azy, who were baptized in January, have been serving as Communion Assistants since shortly after they were baptized. And they are so eager! We should all be that eager to serve. Should I repeat that?

In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, he mentioned several spiritual gifts that seemed appropriate to the Holy Spirit in that day. About those gifts and the Corinthian church, Paul wrote,

11All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.12For 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.

**Raisin’ the Bar Challenge**

At our last confirmation class, I shared this big spreadsheet with you that organizes and displays most of the ministry opportunities in this church. But it was never intended to be a finite list.

I encourage you nine to find your place within your church to live out your lives of discipleship. It may take several tries to find your place. Don't get comfortable there, because the Spirit might have another idea or another need for you elsewhere. The rest of us can help them by inviting them to help with what we do. It may take several tries to find their place. And if you have an interest and feel like the Holy Spirit is leading you in a direction that is not on the spreadsheet, come see me, and let's talk.

To the rest of you, if you haven't found a place to serve, I want to encourage you to look again. There is a place for you here. Zion is not a social club. We are a church, and as a church, we are followers of our Lord Jesus Christ and he told his followers that he came not to be served but to serve and he also told them to go and do likewise. Two-thousand years later, we stand on the shoulders of the apostles and all who came to faith as a result of their work. The mission of God is too important to the salvation of the world to let it dies with us, with you.

**Prayer**

Dear Jesus, we thank you for leaving the Holy Spirit here with us as our protection and provision. Thank you for its power at work in our lives. Help us to be more mindful of its presence, and use it to grow in our Christ-likeness. We pray this in your holy name. Amen