

“Meditation on the Word for Pentecost”

Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron

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Hymns for Worship Video – May 23, 2021

“A Mighty Fortress is our God” #315 in the Book of Praise Vv. 1, 2, 4

(Words adapted for consistency with the Book of Praise)

V. 1 A mighty fortress is our God

A bulwark never failing

Our helper sure amid the flood

Of mortal ills prevailing

For still our ancient foe

Doth seek to work us woe

His craft and power are great

And armed with cruel hate

On earth is not an equal

V. 2 Did we in our own strength confide

Our striving would be losing

Were not a Saviour on our side

The One of God's own choosing

Who is this Saviour, who?

Christ Jesus, living, true

Lord Sabaoth His name

From age to age the same

Already wins the battle

V. 4 That word above all earthly pow'rs

No thanks to them abideth

Ensures that all God's gifts are ours

Through Christ in us residing

Whose summons rings above

All goods all earthly love

Earth's powers waste away

God's word endures always

Whose reign will last forever

Frederick Henry Hedge / Martin Luther / Tommy Walker

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“We are One in the Spirit” #471 in the Book of Praise Vv. 1, 2, 3, 4

V. 1 We are one in the Spirit

We are one in the Lord

We are one in the Spirit

We are one in the Lord

And we pray that all unity

May one day be restored

Chorus

And they'll know we are Christians

By our love by our love

Yes they'll know we are Christians

By our love

V. 2 We will walk with each other

We will walk hand in hand

We will walk with each other

We will walk hand in hand

And together we'll spread the news

That God is in our land

Chorus

V. 3 We will work with each other

We will work side by side

We will work with each other

We will work side by side

And we'll guard each one's dignity

And save each one's pride

Chorus

V. 4 All praise to the Father

From whom all things come

And all praise to Christ Jesus

His only Son

And all praise to the Spirit

Who makes us one

Chorus

Peter Scholtes

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“Let us Break Bread Together” #548 in the Book of Praise Vv. 1, 2

V. 1 Let us break bread together on our knees

Let us break bread together on our knees

When I fall on my knees

With my face to the rising sun

O Lord have mercy on me

V. 2 Let us drink wine together on our knees

Let us drink wine together on our knees

When I fall on my knees

With my face to the rising sun

O Lord have mercy on me

Repeat Vs. 1 following Communion

William Farley Smith

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Closing Chorus: “Walk with the Lord”

Walk with the Lord

Go from this place

filled with his everlasting grace.

Walk with the Lord

Go where he leads

blessed by his love and his peace

Each day you live in all you do

let the light of Christ be found in you

Walk with the Lord

Trust and obey

Go now and serve him in faith

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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Scripture Texts: Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² 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. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Galatians 4:1-7, 5:16-18, 22-26

My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; ² but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. ³ So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶ And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

¹⁶ Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

²² By contrast, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

Meditation

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Happy Birthday to the church!

Today is the day of Pentecost and the church around the world is celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit as it burst into the midst of God’s people to give life and breath to the church. We will be celebrating the sacrament of the Lord’s Table today, the example Jesus gave his disciples to follow, a reminder of why we are who and whose we are. It’s a special day, with a special focus on our historical beginnings – not as a congregation or a denomination, but as the body of Christ in the world.

As I pondered the readings for today’s service, and mused upon the meaning of this day, I felt thankful for the day of Pentecost and wondered what it would have been like to hear the Gospel message of hope in all those languages. It would have been awesome, and yet it may have been a little unnerving too. I imagined what it would be like to be in a place where I did not

speak the language, and yet I suddenly heard the best news of my life through the unexpected voice of someone I could understand. How could that happen? Well, only by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Thanks to that grace and power, people had a message to share with all who could understand them. They publicly declared their faith in the risen Christ in that moment, and they responded to this revelation by submitting to baptism and entering a covenant with God to be Christ's body, the church, in the world. The church grew exponentially that day, and it is still alive to tell and celebrate the story of its birth.

A friend shared an online resource with me last week that gives me access to all kinds of Christian writings and works. There are book suggestions and reviews, and poetry that follows each week of the church year. As I explored this resource, I read the poems for the day of Pentecost. There were two, one classic and one contemporary. The classic poem was written by John Keble and is entitled, simply, "Pentecost." I'd like to share it with you today, as it traces the history and promise of the Holy Spirit's presence with God's people. It opens with the Spirit's descending upon Sinai, references the dove that hovered at Jesus' baptism, moves into the tongues of fire that descended upon the crowd at Pentecost, and closes with a look toward the future, when Christ shall come again.

WHEN God of old came down from heaven,
 In power and wrath He came;
 Before His feet the clouds were riven,
 Half darkness and half flame:
 Around the trembling mountain's base
 The prostrate people lay,
 Convinc'd of sin, but not of grace;
 It was a dreadful day.
 But when He came the second time,
 He came in power and love,
 Softer than gale at morning prime
 Hover'd His holy Dove.
 The fires that rush'd on Sinai down
 In sudden torrents dread,
 Now gently light, a glorious crown,
 On every sainted head.
 Like arrows went those lightnings forth
 Wing'd with the sinner's doom,
 But these like tongues, o'er all the earth
 Proclaiming life to come:
 And as on Israel's awe-struck ear
 The voice exceeding loud,
 The trump, that Angels quake to hear,
 Thrill'd from the deep dark cloud,

So, when the Spirit of our God
Came down His flock to find,
A voice from heaven was heard abroad,
A rushing mighty wind.
Nor doth the outward ear alone
At that high warning start;
Conscience gives back th' appalling tone;
'Tis echoed in the heart.
It fills the Church of God; it fills
The sinful world around;
Only in stubborn hearts and wills
No place for it is found.
To other strains our souls are set:
A giddy whirl of sin
Fills ear and brain, and will not let
Heaven's harmonies come in.
Come, Lord, come, Wisdom, Love, and Power,
Open our ears to hear;
Let us not miss th' accepted hour;
Save, Lord, by Love or Fear. (*Public Domain*)

The arrival and ongoing presence of the Spirit cannot be replaced because it has no equal. It is powerful enough to shake mountains, and as gentle as a dove. It is as startling as fire and as promising as its source – the Triune God. It fills us. It energizes us. It reaches through us. It keeps us alive in faith. And yet, so often its spark is on the back burner of our humanity – the church's humanity – and it is neglected in the face of our human frailty.

Another resource I was reading gave a somewhat humorous, although painfully true depiction of how the Spirit excites us, until we get distracted. It is from the Iona resource *Fire and Bread* and is called "On the Great Day of Pentecost" written by Thom M. Shuman. "On the great day of Pentecost, a mighty wind surged forth from heaven, pushing the followers of Jesus out of the house where they had been hiding, and into the streets. Flames danced above their heads, their tongues began to wag, and people from all over the world heard what they said – no matter what their native language. Peter gave a sermon which would cause Billy Graham to turn green with envy – and three thousand people were baptized. The Church of Jesus Christ was born! On the day *after* Pentecost:

Peter's wife had to yell at him three times to get out of bed, so that he would get his sermon on the website before 9:00 a.m.

The deacons grumbled about cleaning out the baptismal pool.

And the apostles argued about who got to preach on Trinity Sunday, who would choose the hymns, and who would be stuck chairing the Nominating Committee.

Come, Holy Spirit, with your gracious language.

Come, Holy Spirit, with your passion for all people.

Come, Holy Spirit, with your uniting peace.

Come, Holy Spirit!"¹

As we reflect on this day, do we feel the presence of the Spirit? Do we see it at work? Do we hear its voice? Do we experience its fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? I hope so, because it is present in and around us.

It is interacting with us in our selfishness, reluctance, doubt, and sorrow.

It is present in our joy, confidence, humility, and assurance.

It is here. The Holy Spirit is here.

When we come to the Table of our Lord, we do so with all of our frailty and all of our strength.

We come with our faith and our doubt.

We come because we love the Lord, and we are drawn here because of the Lord's love for us.

We come to be reminded of God's power in Christ, and to receive God's grace by the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, blow through your people like the wind, and ignite the fire within us that inspires us to share the best news of our lives with those whose lives are still waiting to receive it.

Come, Holy Spirit. Revive your people. Revive your church.

Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

Amen.

¹ Fire and Bread, Compiled by Ruth Burgess. Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow, UK, Pg. 157.