

Rev Sally's Sermon
May 23, 2021
The Day of Pentecost

If you went up to Main Street and conducted a survey asking, "What's Pentecost?", you'd probably get a lot of confused looks. One might ask, "Do you mean penthouse?" Another might say "Do you mean the cost of a Pinto?" meaning the classic 1970's car. Someone who's really intelligent and knows a little Latin, might say "Penta. I know that means five, but I don't know what the rest means." But most would have no idea what Pentecost really was.

But today is the feast of Pentecost. It is the third most important celebration in the Christian year. Pentecost comes fifty days after Easter (Hence "Penta"). It is the celebration of the day that God sent his Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples, empowering them to continue Jesus' work in the world. Because of this, some call Pentecost the birthday of the Church. On Pentecost, a rag tag group of Jesus's followers were empowered by God's Holy Spirit to come together to form the church, the community of God's people and to then do the work of God in his world.

As the Church, the community of God's people today, we are called to continue the work of the first apostles. We are called to allow God's Holy Spirit to continue to work through us. This is what we prayed in today's collect, "Shed abroad this gift, (which is the Holy Spirit), throughout the world by the preaching of the gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth."

So, what does it look like when this Holy Spirit is active among us? First it means that we are drawn together as one. This is what community is about. It doesn't mean that we won't disagree, but we will show love and respect to each other, even those we disagree with. This is what it means to be one. As we are drawn together, we will support each other. We will care for the sick, we will listen to the lonely, we will encourage the

downhearted. And we will grow together in our relationship with God. We will worship with each other. We will pray for one another. We will learn from the faith of others. As we live in this kind of community, we will know the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

But the gift of God's Holy Spirit isn't just about us and our faith. It is also given for the purpose of accomplishing God's work in the world. The Holy Spirit will show us how we can spread the good news of Jesus' life throughout our world. We will be called to spread this good news through our words and actions. Others will experience the presence of God through both our words and actions. Both are needed. I see this happening right here at St. Paul's. As our children learn about their faith both in-person and over zoom. As parishioners share their faith stories in our Tuesday Bible study. And as we come together to serve, like last Wednesday when we prepared dinner for the residents of the Men's shelter in Rock Hill.

Now you might wonder how we are able to do God's work. It might seem beyond our resources. But the gift of the Holy Spirit and the fruit that it produces is not of ourselves but of God. In Acts, we heard that the ministry of the first apostles was "as the spirit gave them ability." We are reminded of this in our Baptismal covenant when we are asked "Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?" and we respond, "I will, with God's help." As we open our lives to the Holy Spirit, we will discover that there is no limit to what God can accomplish in our lives.

We've been through a lot over the past 14 months. But as I look at life, I see just how blessed we are. We are still together as one. Hope for a brighter future is dawning. And Easter has reminded us that God's life is stronger than death. Now as we celebrate Pentecost this year, let's claim it as the feast of the rebirth of God's Church and of the ministry of His people.