

## Acts 2:1-21

### Hope and Possibility

The sound like the rush of a violent wind filling an entire house and only what could be described as divided tongues, that appeared like fire moving among them and then resting on every person in the room. I can't even begin to imagine the fear of the people gathered there. So often we think of Pentecost as this mundane story of how the church began, but the Holy Spirit showed up and it probably felt more like all hell broke loose!

I have never experienced a natural disaster, but this description of the Holy Spirit showing up seems to me to resemble more like the sound of what some people are experiencing due to uncontrolled forest fires than the peaceful dove that also represents the Holy Spirit. The dove is another symbol we get from the story of the baptism of Jesus to represent the Holy Spirit demonstrating that the Holy Spirit cannot be contained within one symbol. It is complex and has many roles as scripture attests to as advocate, comforter, along with teacher, to name only a few roles. The Spirit was there when creation came into being and the Holy Spirit is sent from Jesus and God to us to accompany us in the ways that are needed for God's work to be done and for us to know that God goes with us.

The story doesn't stop with the wind and fire; the people present get accused of being drunk and disorderly as they start speaking in different languages. Now interestingly enough these are all recognizable languages. They are the languages of the people present. You see, many people were in Jerusalem at the time to celebrate an ancient Jewish harvest festival that also recognized the gift of the law or Ten Commandments as given to Moses. So there were people from around the region present who had languages native to their area and were now hearing people talking to them about Christ and the story of hope and possibility in a way that was deeply personal.

Think about it. You find yourself in a place where the language is not your first language. Maybe you understand those around you, maybe you don't. Yet if you hear someone speak in the language you are most comfortable with there is a feeling of welcome and security. You are more likely to hear, really hear what someone is saying to you, not just the words but also the hear the meaning behind the words in ways you cannot when it comes to you in another language. We know that language, that words shape us and so to hear people speak to you in a language that is part of oneself can also change us.

The number of voices and the ruckus had people hearing it all thinking that the group had more than their fair share of libations. Peter somehow manages to get a handle on the crowd and started in on a sermon that would change lives. He begins a sermon with

a quote from the prophet Joel. Once again, the words are not really all that comforting, they are actually a little terrifying with signs on the earth of blood, fire, and smoky mist. The sun turning to darkness and the moon to blood. This is the description of what will come in the days when God pours out the Spirit upon all flesh, with children of God speaking with divinely inspired words. Young men seeing visions of the future and old men dreaming dreams of what can be.

This is powerful stuff, and the thing is, that the powerful, life-giving, possibility provoking Spirit hasn't gone away as if that was only for that time in history. The Holy Spirit is still present, still at work, still filling the world with a message of hope and possibility and disruption.

Our denomination, as with most churches, is in decline. The message of Jesus' saving grace just doesn't seem to land on people with the same power as it did in the past. The reasons are many, but I often wonder if it is because we have conveniently put the Holy Spirit in the corner of our faith. We forget how powerfully the Holy Spirit can and will act, but we have to be open to it. Dare I say, pray for the Holy Spirit to come into our midst and change us so that the way we do ministry has an impact on us and maybe even on others here and in the city, maybe even more broadly than that.

Just think of the many people present on the first Pentecost as it was celebrated with Peter and the others. People went from there, back to their communities and the power of that moment continued to sustain them. We know this because here we sit centuries later still proclaiming the saving grace of the risen Lord for our own time. This is a story with life-changing power, yet, so many of us, even those of us who show up at church or read the sermon at home regularly often don't know the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through them, not only for their transformation, but for the transformation of the world.

I have been so proud of this congregation because of the work we have been doing and continue to do because of the openness to hope and possibility. The willingness to be curious, creative, and courageous. Still, we have not even begun to touch the depths of change, hope, and possibility that could be ours. The Holy Spirit still comes with power and might, but when the Spirit does that it is terrifying, however often our prayers do not invite that power. We say the words, but really, change is not what we want. David Lose puts it this way, "...while I've never heard anyone actually pray, 'Come Holy Spirit that we might remain exactly as we are,' that's often how we act. For whatever we may mouth on Pentecost, most of the time we resist meaningful change in favor of 'the way things have always been done.'"<sup>1</sup>

Even as this congregation has done a lot to reset how we think and what we are doing, we have not even begun to imagine as big as God can do. To really see what the Holy Spirit wants to do with us is going to take a lot of prayer, and not just of a few, but of this

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<sup>1</sup> David Lose. [Pentecost Change - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#). Accessed June 7, 2025.

whole community of faith. It is going to take a lot of courage because the Holy Spirit at work does not allow us to stay comfortable, in fact it is always challenging, changing, and scary. Power is scary and especially the power of God. Yet that same Spirit that challenges and changes us goes with us as guide, comforter, advocate, teacher and more.

The Spirit will change us as individuals, and the Spirit will change our church. It is work and worship filled with hope and possibility. It is work and worship filled with angst and unknowns. It is work and worship that transforms us and the world around us. Let's begin to see visions of our future and dream dreams that are impactful and bold, all the while understanding that this also invites disruption and stress. It will take our loving one another through it, yet refusing to stay as we have always been so that we might share this life-saving gospel story of Jesus with the world as God calls us to it.

At Pentecost the people were accused of people drunk, today that might say we are high on something, but the point is others will want to dismiss us, but in the power of the Holy Spirit we can continue to share the word of hope, love, grace, forgiveness, and possibility to all who will listen, to all that we are called to love.

And that is also the overarching point of this Holy Spirit, life-changing, message of God that goes out into the world through us. God is love. In the challenges before us, the work that we do, the worship we participate in, the relationships we build, the changes we make, it is all for the sake of people knowing that they are loved by God. Each made as image bearer of God, each meant to know the deep and abiding love of God, each meant to share in the love that is so deep, so high, so broad, that it cannot be contained.

This is the hope and possibility that is ours to share, to live into, to experience. This is Pentecost and it didn't just happen once. Pentecost is the ongoing transformation of the world in which we live. The Holy Spirit shows up! It is bold, frightening, empowering, and transforming. Today we pray to be curious, creative, and courageous in the power of the Holy Spirit and mean it when we say, "Come Holy Spirit, come!"