

*This message is based on the many acts of the Holy Spirit throughout the Bible. It was delivered to the Tontogany Presbyterian Church on Pentecost Sunday, May 20 in the year of our LORD two thousand and eighteen by Rev. Pamela Graf Short.*

## **Acts 2**

**1** 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.

**5** Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.

**6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

**7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

**8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

**9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

**10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

**11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

**12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

**13** But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

**14** But 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.

**15** Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.

**16** No, 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.

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

**19** And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

**20** The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

**21** Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

**22** "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—

**23** this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.

**24** But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

**25** For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;

**26** therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope.

**27** For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption.

**28** You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

**29**"Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

**30** Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne.

- 31** Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, "He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.'
- 32** This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.
- 33** Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.
- 34** For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand,  
**35** until I make your enemies your footstool." '
- 36** Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."
- 37** Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"
- 38** Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 39** For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."
- 40** And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."
- 41** So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.
- 42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- 43** Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.
- 44** All who believed were together and had all things in common;
- 45** they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.
- 46** Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,
- 47** praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**O**ur Bible story for today sparks the tongues of the faithful and ignites their hearts like a spring fire burning off the dead grass.

It sets off a way for the life of the Spirit to flare up in the church and blaze into the world.

The Holy Spirit comes in a new way in the flames of Pentecost, but that does not mean it was the first time the Holy Spirit came.

The creation story tells us that  
 "a Spirit from God swept over the waters".

In the Hebrew the word "swept" is the same word used for a mother bird sweeping over her nest.

Thus, from the very beginning the Holy Spirit was active in watching over,  
 in hovering over,  
 in brooding over the earth with a caring heart.

In Exodus the Holy Spirit was active,  
 like the Spirit is in Tontogany.

The Spirit filled artisans so that they could prepare items that would enhance their worship.  
 Some cut stones, others worked with gold,  
 others embroidered curtains, others carved wood.

The Holy Spirit,  
also known as “the Spirit of the LORD”  
came upon judges such as Joshua,  
and upon kings such as Saul and David.  
In many cases,  
it seems that this was a temporary filling;  
that the Spirit came to these humans to assist them with a specific task.  
When Gideon was just ready to go into battle  
the Spirit of the LORD came upon him  
and he blew a trumpet and called his soldiers to arms (Judges 6:34-35).

The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets,  
sometimes in what we call “ecstatic” language;  
a sort of special language of the Spirit;  
and sometimes in plain simple words that anyone with ears to hear could easily understand.

Generally, these messages were words of warning and sometimes words of comfort. One of the roles of the prophet is to carry the heart of God to the people, therefore many times the words had to do with those who were tender to God’s heart:  
the poor, the widow, the immigrant and the orphan.

Sometimes the words had to do with God’s broken heart as the people chased after other gods, worshipping idols instead of loving YHWH  
with all their heart and soul and mind.

Though the people left God,  
the Spirit of God did not leave the people.  
When the Jews began returning to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon, Zerubbabel was in charge of rebuilding the temple. It seemed like an impossible task. An angel said to the prophet Zachariah:  
*“This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.”* **Zechariah 4:1-11**

Some of you may recall that in the story of baby Jesus’ dedication that the Holy Spirit rested on Simeon.  
Does this blessing sound familiar to you?  
“May the Holy Spirit Rest On You.”

Like the wind,  
the role of the Holy Spirit is not easily contained, but rather is multi-faceted.  
In the Gospel of John Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the one who births us;  
as the One who guides us into truth;  
as the helper, the advocate, the comforter.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit calls us like a mother wanting a little help.  
Perhaps you have had the experience of thinking you should telephone someone  
or make a visit  
or send a check.  
Perhaps, like me, you push these urges aside.

Here is a Holy Spirit story from a farmer I knew who also happened to be a volunteer chaplain at a local jail. *I was busy hauling manure when I felt a call that I should go to the jail to visit somebody. All morning I kept feeling this. At noon when I came in for dinner I told Shirley about it. I said I will go tomorrow afternoon. I kept telling God I will go, but how will I see this person? There are close to 600 people there! I prayed "I'll go, but you will have to lead me to the right person."*

*I went into a unit inside with about 60 people and talked to a man and we had a good conversation. I told God, I don't think this is the person you want me to see. I told this inmate I had to see someone else today and went to an outside unit with about 60 people in this unit also. I walked in and asked God to lead me to the right person. I walked to the farthest bunk from the door. I introduced myself and said I was a volunteer chaplain. He told me he had been praying for 2 days for a chaplain to visit him. I told him for 2 days I was being told to visit somebody. He told me he was watching me as soon as I came in the doorway. He said I walked directly to him without looking at anyone else. This was the person God was calling me to. The Spirit was so strong. I just about shook. I thanked God for the opportunity to trust him. I will never forget this experience.*

Perhaps you have had the urge to pray for someone at a specific moment. An aunt once had a strong urge to pray for her nephew who was a doctor in Viet Nam at the time of the war. She discovered later that the Holy Spirit woke her at the exact time that her nephew was being abducted.

In Romans Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as the one who moans for us with sighs too deep for words; as the one who intercedes for us; as the one who gifts us with all nature of things necessary for building up the body of Christ: With gifts of healing and generosity and helps and encouragement and admonishment and teaching and administration and on and on it goes. So too has the Holy Spirit gifted Tontogany.

In Galatians we are told that the Spirit bears fruit in people. In the book of Daniel we read "Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master" (Daniel 1:9). From whom did this fruit of compassion come, except from the Holy Spirit?

No, the Holy Spirit cannot be contained, not by one nation or one race or one economy. The Holy Spirit is free to move about the world gifting and filling and strengthening and guiding whenever, wherever and whomever God chooses:

The Holy Spirit comes in the dreams of the old and the visions of the young;  
The Holy Spirit is indifferent to gender  
and sees no problem with empowering the marginalized to declare the deepest truths  
and most profound judgments.  
The Holy Spirit testifies to the truth of the love of God through the life and death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Paradoxically, the Holy Spirit chooses to be contained in your very own body.

In I Corinthians 6:19-20 we read, *"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."*

It seems that in these latter days the Holy Spirit chooses to stick around; to make a home in your very own body. While our culture seeks to separate the acts of the bodies from the acts of the spirit, that is not the way of God.

But rather in Acts 2:42 we read,  
“They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread and to prayers.”

As we come to the table today, we come like those gathered on the day of Pentecost ready to receive into our bodies simple elements touched by the grace of Jesus through the loving presence of the Holy Spirit.

We come as Resurrection people who have both the Word of God and the Spirit of God dwelling in us, guiding us,  
empowering us,  
forgiving us,  
loving us in body, mind and spirit.

The artistry of the Holy Spirit stands in the midst of the drama of re-enacting the supper of Christ Jesus.

The beauty of the Holy Spirit surrounds us in this sanctuary.

The Mystery of the Holy Spirit enters us with each breath,  
with each crumb of bread  
and each drop of the common cup.

As you take the bread and dip it into the cup,  
consider the body and blood of Christ  
and consider your own body being saturated by the compassion of the Holy Spirit  
and your tongue touched by the loving power to proclaim the story of Jesus in this place and out into the world.

Now may the Holy Spirit of our mighty God  
Empower you with grace  
Fill you with courage  
And rest on you with  
mystery,  
honor,  
holiness  
and  
peace  
now and forever more.