

Pastor Jon's May 23, 2021 Sermon on Pentecost 2021. Based on Acts 2.

"It's worth the wait"

Tom Petty once wrote a song called "The Waiting". It was a love song where he described how hard it was to be away from the one he loved. In an interview he said, "It's about waiting for your dreams and not knowing if they will come true." The chorus goes:

"The waiting is the hardest part
Every day you see one more card
You take it on faith, you take it to the heart
The waiting is the hardest part"

It seems like we have been waiting for a long time for Covid to take a break from disrupting our world... our dreams, our lives. Waiting for the unknown is the hardest part. Just seeing people smile again in public gives me hope.

In our first lesson from Acts, known as the Pentecost... 50 Days after Easter... the apostles are waiting for the promised Holy Spirit from Jesus. Recall that 10 days earlier, Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait. Jesus said, "You will be baptized with the Spirit not many days from now. How many days, Jesus? What should we do in the meantime? Jesus continued, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

And just as Jesus said this, he ascended out of site into the clouds. The apostles stood there gawking... looking up like a child who accidentally let a balloon go up into the atmosphere. But two angels appeared saying, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven." The angels instituted a no gawking rule. Work must be done.

Waiting for anything is hard. Waiting for 10 days without any idea of what are you waiting for seems even harder. Amazon has spoiled us with prime shipping. Do you agree? If you have to wait more than two days for a package you become impatient.

What would this Holy Spirit look like, what will it do?

As advertised the Apostles were in Jerusalem together in one place. Jesus' promise was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit came like a violent rush of wind. Tongues of fire rested on each person in the house. Luke said **All** of them were filled with the Holy Spirit... and they began to speak in other languages. Not tongues... but languages. The miracle of Rosetta Stone.

The Holy Spirit gave the Apostle's the gift of a new language and moved them outside. In other words, Elvis has left the building. The church has left the building. God doesn't want people to hear the story of Jesus in one language but in multiple languages. The church is called to translate the message of Jesus into languages people can understand. God desires diversity in the church.

To all the Jewish pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem for a the harvest festival, the Apostles, mostly uneducated Galileans, were outside preaching the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in other people's native language. They couldn't believe it. Some thought they were filled with new wine.

New wine is from grapes that have been through a recent process of crushing. How many of you can relate to being a grape in wine press this past year? I know I can. In the Hebrew, the words translated 'new wine' mean *freshly pressed before it is fully fermented. It was sweet wine. Prophets used this phrase, new wine, as term to describe a new teaching or prophecy.*

God is doing a new thing.

Peter addresses the men of Judea and Jerusalem... who are critical of what is happening. He defends the apostle's saying they're not drunk as you suppose. It is only 9:00 in the morning.

Peter interprets this moment of the giving of the Holy Spirit as a fulfillment of the prophet Joel. Where in the last days, the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh.... all genders, all ages, and all social statuses. Male and female, young and old, slave or free.

This really convicted me as I wondered, “which prophetic voices am I listening to. What about children’s voices and their visions, voices of the elderly sharing their dreams, prisoners and slaves crying out for justice, women and the LGBTQ community calling for equal treatment in the workplace? All people will prophesy. This week I listened to Palestinian and Jewish voices who want peace on the ground in the Holy Land. Palestinians are losing their homes and Jewish people are getting beaten on the streets of America. Give us ears to hear these voices and act.

In this story of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we see a vision for the church today. God desires inclusion of all. God doesn’t just desire for everyone to learn English. God wants us to meet people where they are at. God wants us to use our gifts and talents from the Holy Spirit to translate the Gospel in all languages... including, I think, in a series of 0’s and 1’s to our younger generation. God wants us to leave the building.

I love Kimberly Clark’s new advertising push and desire to bring a more diverse working and living population to the Fox Valley. On a billboard on Cecil Street as you are heading East over the bridge it says:

Without action, inclusion is just a word.

I literally had to pull over. I thought to myself, “Way to go Kimberly Clark.”

Action. The Holy Spirit moves us to action. The Holy Spirit helps us when we pray. It is our Advocate. A Comforter. Our Teacher. Our Guide.

May we listen as a church body to where the Spirit is moving us. These are exciting times as we emerge out of our time of waiting.

Amen.