

Pastor Jon's Pentecost/Memorial Day Sermon on May 28, 2023 based on Acts 2:1-21 and Psalm 104

Memorial Day or Decoration Day as it was first called is when people would decorate graves of fallen soldiers with flowers, wreaths, or flags... has now become a day to remember all who have died. I can't help but to think of my dad who died a year ago on June 7th.

I miss my dad, especially when he was healthy and strong before the cancer. He taught me so many things... practical things. He taught me how to change a tire. To do electrical work. He coached little league and had to deal with my poor attitude at times on the field. He took us fishing and water skiing. He was generous to the community and a good example of faithfulness in marriage.

Who are you thinking of or missing this day? Take a moment to turn to a neighbor... or think to yourselves... about someone you are missing and what you miss about them. Take a minute each.

Today, as Patty said, we celebrate Pentecost in the church. The church began when the promised Holy Spirit entered a house where the disciples were staying and filled it completely. A tongue of fire rested on each person in the house.

An image of a tongue of fire resting on someone's head could be seen on some Roman coins. It meant the dawn of a new era. The writer of Luke/Acts tells us that all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and were miraculously given the ability to speak in a new language.

On this day, I also think of all the saints who have gone before us in the faith. I think of all those faith influencers in our lives who felt God and church were important enough to model and try to pass on. Peter proclaimed that day that this was the fulfillment of the prophet Joel when the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh... on sons and daughters, young and old, slave and free. The church would gift all people of all ages, genders, and abilities.

Once the Spirit came like a rush of violent wind, the disciples were whooshed outside to proclaim the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in multiple languages to the Jewish people who were

gathered in Jerusalem that day. Everyone could hear the story of Jesus in their own language.

You see, God wants to meet people where they are at and in multiple languages... almost a reversal of the scattering of languages in Tower of Babel story in Genesis. This is the challenge for the church today. How can we translate the story of Jesus love in a language people understand and that is relevant? How can we share the good news of Jesus to a child, teenager, adult, or persons near the end of life that counters all the other news that is not so good?

Did you catch that the Spirit rested on each of them. That means on us too. Each one of us is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit... that was promised in our baptism. The fruit of the Holy Spirit are gifts like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. And yet, we discount our own gifts. We compare ourselves to others, or want to hide our gifts... or think someone else is more equipped than we are can do the job. Discounting our own gifts is really discounting God's creativity in us. I think of the Hymn "There is a Balm in Gilead" that comforts me when I compare my gifts to other pastors and don't think I measure up. The 3<sup>rd</sup> verse goes:

3. If you cannot preach like Peter,  
if you cannot pray like Paul,  
you can tell the love of Jesus,  
who died to save us all. I can do that... share the love of Jesus.

The last thing I want to talk about is thankfulness. Our Psalm for today, Psalm 104 is a Psalm of praise to God our creator and provider for the wonders of creation. So as we encounter swarms of lake flies and mosquitos, remember they have a purpose too. 95% of Lakeflies are eaten by fish or birds to keep that ecosystem going. Psalmist looks at the interconnectedness of all creatures and how God gives them their food in due season. In our section for today, the sea is a marvel of God's creation... all creatures great and small. The psalm even says God created the leviathan, or sea monster, for the sport of it.

The Psalmist is in awe of God's creation and God providing for all creatures. I was in awe on Thursday afternoon when Leo Patt took me fishing on Winnebago. We were trolling in his boat. He said he

hasn't seen a walleye caught. He gave me a poll and bait to use. I casted out as we trolled. My first fish was a sheephead. Then I caught a white bass. Then low and behold, I said, fish on... it was a walleye. A few minutes later, I said to Leo, fish on. He is a gifted guide. Then I caught a third walleye... And Leo caught nothing. He was awful generous. I was on the right side of the boat. Jesus said something about that in the Gospels. Thank you Leo for a great day. What do you marvel at in God's creation? What are you thankful for today? Let us live our lives with thankfulness to God for the wonders of creation. It will spill over to others. Amen