

Pastor Jon's Pentecost Sermon from Sunday, May 19, 2024.

Today, we celebrate the Pentecost... also known as the birthday of the church. It is the day the Holy Spirit arrived, as promised by Jesus, in a rush of wind and tongues of fire... giving the disciples newfound courage and gifts to go out and proclaim Jesus' to the world.

Still today we gather in the warmth and power of the Holy Spirit, just as the early disciples did on that day two thousand years ago.

In a little bit, we will lay hands on seven of our 8th graders as they affirm their baptism. We will pray for the Spirit they received in baptism to stir up in them wisdom and understanding, council and might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord and joy in God's presence.

It is clear in this story from Acts 2 that God wants the word about Jesus to spread to the ends of the earth... beginning in Jerusalem. This story tells me that God loves diversity. God wants everyone to hear the Gospel in a language they can understand... and from people of all types to proclaim the Gospel, young and old, men and women, slave and free according to Peter's interpretation of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. We will call that the train.

The engine that drives the train, and the main actor in the book of Acts is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit animates the church, gives people gifts, and equips them to go out and proclaim the Gospel in ways people can understand.

Speaking of gifts, I want to lift up our confirmation students and the gifts I have seen in them. Aria, you have the gift of joy and smiling, especially when you sing and perform on stage. Shelbey, you have the gift listening and competitiveness especially in track. Allie, you have the gift of laughter and reverence. You are a hoot to be around and you have a deep reverence for God. Annabelle, you have the gift of kindness and friendship. You are such a good friend to others. You have the gift of showing up. Aiden, you have the gift of loyalty and peace. Aiden was always the first to show up at confirmation, he loved going in the gym. But also, he said our church has a great vibe. His faith gives him peace. Kendal, you have the gift of gentleness, but I understand you are killer on the basketball court. And Miley, you have the gift of patience. You want to be a teacher and work with

kids. God will use your gifts the rest of your life to draw people to faith and bless others.

You all, no doubt, have many influencers in your lives on youtube, tick toc and Instagram. My hope and prayer is that Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the ultimate influencer in your life?

The church must continue to listen to where the Holy Spirit is calling us. I'm afraid the old model for church... build it and they will come won't work forever. We can't always expect people to show up at church and conform to our rituals and churchy language. Recall that those first disciples were whooshed out of the building to go out and meet the people where they are at. You are the church at home, school, or work.

Well thankfully, God did a new thing at Pentecost. It reminds me of the creation story in Genesis 1. The Holy wind of God, the Holy Spirit moved over the formless void, the watery chaos, and created the heavens and the earth. God brought order out of chaos and it was very good.

In the Pentecost Story, the Holy Spirit rested on all who were in the house. Each one received a tongue of fire over their head and were given spiritual gifts... each according to their ability. I love that. All received the holy spirit and unique gifts... each according to their ability.

Not one of you is the same... therefore we need to trust God made us exactly the way God wanted us. We shouldn't compare our gifts to others because it poo poos God's creative work in you.

What does it mean for us to be a relevant church in the world? A lesson from Swiss watchmaking can help us understand. In 1968, Switzerland dominated the watchmaking industry due to its commitment to innovation and refinement. However, by 1980, the Swiss watchmaking industry suffered a significant decline. This was primarily because Swiss manufacturers resisted embracing the Quartz watch movement, unlike competitors like Seiko, the Japanese watchmaker. Seiko revolutionized the watch industry by providing exceptional accuracy and increased convenience through the use of a

movement that relied on a battery instead of a wound mainspring. The battery in a quartz watch generates an electric current that creates a vibration in a piece of quartz inside the watch. This piece of quartz vibrates at a specific frequency, keeping the ticking of the watch accurate. This refusal to adapt to changing technology and consumer preferences led to the Swiss watchmakers' downfall, highlighting the importance of foresight and adaptability in maintaining success.

Success and relevancy for the church means we must be open to creating new approaches to proclaim the gospel. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit allowed the disciples to speak a new language so others could understand.

To our young people, I will emphasize that the Gospel says you are enough right now. You don't need others approval to define you. It says God is with you in your struggles and challenges in life. God is a God of second and third and infinite chances. God loves you no matter what. God wants you to use your gifts to make the world better and invite others into the faith. God will be with you when you fail. The cross of Jesus tells us so.

May we, like the early disciples, be filled with the fire of God's Spirit, emboldened to proclaim the Good News through our words and our deeds! Amen