

**The Re-Presenter**  
John 14:8-17, 25-27  
Day of Pentecost  
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It's the Day of Pentecost, or Pentecost Sunday, and our reading from Acts chapter 2 is the familiar story of the disciples of Jesus receiving the Holy Spirit. Often thought of the "Birthday of the Church," this is the day we remember God's gift of the Holy Spirit to the church. The Acts story includes wind and fire, and the cacophony of the disciples speaking in different languages all at the same time. The amazement, confusion, and doubts of the crowds, and Peter's first sermon, the first proclamation of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, is any of that really relevant for most of us?

Don't get me wrong, it is a fantastic story. A story that talks about the wonder and power of the gifts of God. The power of God to transform a lost and confused, frightened and timid, group of men from the back country of first century Israel, into a dynamic, good news preaching, band of apostles that will change the world.

I can only speak with certainty about my own experiences of the Holy Spirit, and pyrotechnics and speaking in tongues are not part of my story. Preaching, yes, but only in English with a little Greek now and then. Yet, even without the special effects of the Pentecost in Acts, we know the Holy Spirit of God. As Christians we believe in God: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That being said, how do we understand the Holy Spirit?

I think we can get some understanding from our gospel reading for this Pentecost Sunday, John, chapter 14, verses 8 through 17, and 25 through 27. Listen to this reading from the Final Discourse of Jesus in the Gospel of John:

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

<sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

<sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup> Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

<sup>13</sup> I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

<sup>14</sup> If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

<sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.

<sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

<sup>25</sup> "I have said these things to you while I am still with you.

<sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### Sermon

In verse 7, the verse before our reading, Jesus said, "If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Which prompted the question from Philip: "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus responds, with some scolding, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Incarnational theology is central to John's gospel. Starting in the beginning John tells us that "the Word was God," and "the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." John's gospel is the story of Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Son of God, the truth. Jesus is God made flesh on earth. Jesus is the Father. The truth of the incarnation is that if we wish to see God, we wish to experience God, we should see and experience Jesus Christ. Shirley Guthrie, in his book, "Christian Doctrine," says it like this:

If you want to know what God is like, Christian theology says: Look at Christ...if you want to know what God is doing in the world and in your lives – look at Christ."

The incarnation of God, in Jesus Christ, changes everything for the disciples and for all Christians, because through the incarnation humanity's relationship

to God and God's relationship to humanity are decisively altered. The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ brings the tangible presence of God's love to earth.

The problem that now faces the disciples is that Jesus is clearly telling them that he will be leaving them. Everything that Jesus has done, the works that he has accomplished were meant to communicate his incarnational presence as God with them, and now, as they are maybe getting the idea, finally understanding, he will be leaving them. Jesus' death and departure presents the disciples with a crisis far greater than simply the loss of their teacher and friend. Jesus' death and return to the Father marked the end of the incarnation. If the revelation of God is lodged in the incarnation, what happens when Jesus is gone? Was Jesus' revelation of God possible only for the first generation of believers, available only to those who had physical contact with Jesus and his ministry? Was Jesus' revelation of God limited to one particular moment in history, or does it have a future?

Jesus' promise to the disciples, and to all Christians throughout history is that he will not leave them, will not leave us, alone. Jesus promises, what the Father promises, the Spirit of Truth, the Advocate, who will follow him. The Father, "will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever." The Advocate that will come will teach them and remind them of everything that Jesus did and said to them. The Advocate who will come to the disciples, and comes to us, is the one who re-presents the incarnational love of God that was alive in Jesus Christ.

Through the promise of the Paraclete, Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension is not the end, but the beginning of an era of new life in the believing community. In John 16, verses 7 & 8, Jesus goes as far as saying that his departure is a good thing: "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you." The gift of the Holy Spirit frees the knowledge of the incarnation from any limits of time and space. Knowledge of the love of God made known in the incarnation is available to the community through the Holy Spirit.

For our Lenten series hear at Bethel we looked at the Fruits of the Spirit. We focused on Paul's words in Galatians, chapter 22, verses 22 and 23:

"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Each week, we delved into one of the fruits from Paul's list: Joy, Peace, Generosity, Faithfulness, and Love. We learned that these things manifest in the community as gifts from the Spirit. They are not things that we can produce or create. Like fruit that grows on a tree or a vine, it is a gift of God's creation. At the very best, we can nurture

and help these fruits grow in the community. These gifts grow in and flow out of the community of the church by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, in the end, we may not feel the wind and witness the flames of that first Pentecost in Acts. We may not utter or proclaim in other languages, and most of us may not preach to the crowds, but all of us in the community and the church of Jesus Christ are recipients of the Holy Spirit. Because in John's gospel, and in the incarnational presence of the Son of God, the Paraclete is a gift to the community. It is not about individual and internal experiences, but the re-presentation of the incarnational love of God and the presence of Jesus Christ to the community of the faithful, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

Holy Spirit of God, by your presence in this community, and in the greater church, you re-present to us the love of God, in Jesus Christ. Open our hearts to your life altering gift. Grant us vision to see your work, and courage to live out the love of God, in this community and in the world.

Amen.