

Gethsemane Lutheran Church

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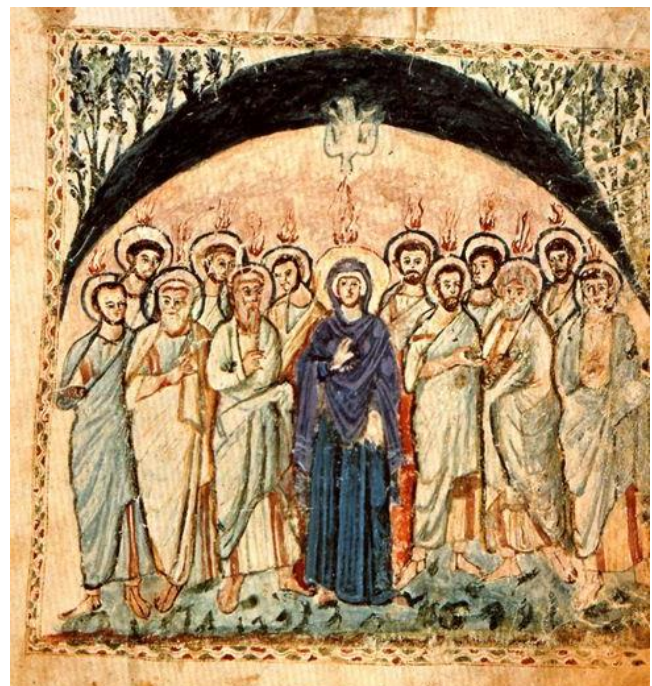
Lectionary Bible Study for Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-21

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” Acts 2:4 (NRSV)

After Jesus rose from the dead, but before he ascended to heaven, Jesus instructed the disciples to remain in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:4-5). Among those waiting were not only the men, but also women. *“All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers”* (Acts 1:13). **Have you noticed that there is usually an image of Mary among the disciples in ancient art depicting the Pentecost?**

According to the scriptures, the Holy Spirit came to the disciples while they were observing the Jewish holiday of Shavuot or the “Feast of Weeks.” Shavuot is both an agricultural festival commemorating the wheat harvest and a religious holiday that marks the giving of the Torah by God to the people of Israel on Mt. Sinai. The ten commandments were “proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire” (Deut. 9:10). As in our Pentecost story, the images of



holy fire and smoke are present in the Jewish celebration of Shavuot.

“Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem” (Acts 2:5). Jerusalem, a city inhabited since the Stone Age, had long been a place where people of many ethnicities, cultures and religions gathered. The Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney* writes:

“Jerusalem, the place where the church was birthed in the fires of Pentecost has been a multi-ethnic city for more than three thousand years. It was multi-ethnic when David conquered it. It was multi-ethnic after David conquered it and made it his capital. It was multi-ethnic when the Babylonians captured it. It was multi-ethnic when the Persians took it from the Babylonians. Jerusalem was multi-ethnic when Jesus walked its streets and it was a blessed cacophony of languages and cultures on Pentecost, even before the Holy Spirit added new languages to the mix.”

Mary and the disciples were gathered together when suddenly a loud sound interrupted their waiting and a powerful wind filled their house. Tongues “as of fire” passed through the room, touching each of them. Each person was filled with God’s Spirit and began to speak in other languages...*Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts, Cretans and Arabs...*

The noise was so loud that it attracted a crowd. Everyone was amazed, perplexed and confused. How could these Galileans have the capacity to speak in languages that they did not know? While Jerusalem was a multi-ethnic city, the followers of Jesus were not...*not yet*. But now the disciples were giving clear testimony to God’s mighty acts. Their isolation had been broken and the wind of the Holy Spirit had brought them into connection with people from places they did not know, cultures that they did not share, languages they previously could not understand.

The Holy Spirit did not allow the followers of Jesus to remain small and separate. In a powerful and life-changing way, the Holy Spirit required the message of the gospel to be spread through the city of Jerusalem. That same Holy Spirit is here in our city today.

Rev. Gafney* says: “The Holy Spirit is the Mother of the Church, and as is the case in many families, she is the glue that holds it together. She breathes us to life, pouring out onto all of her people without regard for age, gender, or social standing filling us with that love embodied in Jesus.” **How is the Holy Spirit at work in your life? Who are you being called to talk to in our city about Jesus?**

Come, Holy Spirit! We are ready for the fire of your transforming word, the wind of your powerful presence among us. Give us the boldness to testify to others about Jesus and his saving work in our lives. Bless our community of faith that we may increase in diversity, wisdom and strength. Amen.

*<https://www.wilgafney.com/2018/05/20/holy-fire/>