

Pentecost 2020
 Acts 2:1-21
 The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry
 Pentecost is Real: Today

May the God....

Good Morning!

They had no idea, what it meant to be baptized by the Holy Spirit. And by the reaction of some in the crowd, many people had no idea what to think of it. So we are faced with this line, one of my most favorite in scripture.

“No—they’re not drunk, it’s only 9:00 in the morning.” Thus giving us, if nothing else a memorable, scriptural denying of day-drinking.

They had been together, perhaps still in that upper room in Jerusalem. The 11 apostles, plus Mathias, newly chosen to replace Judas, the women who went to the tomb and maybe even 120 more waiting for the Holy Spirit.

Whatever in the world that was supposed to mean.

“Stay in Jerusalem”, says, Jesus, remain there and I will send to you the Holy Spirit and then, you will become witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8.

And now it happened, on the morning of Pentecost, 50 days after the feast of Passover. There is a rush and roar of the wind, filling the house, howling through the windows, up the stairs, careening through the doors, flinging in the air everything not held down. As they brushed their hair from their eyes and looked around they see, what seems to be individual flames momentarily parked atop each other’s heads and then before they could even comment, the Spirit fills their souls and words pour forth from their lips.

What they utter, what they say, is not just awe or wonder, but words about God, thoughts about Jesus, in phrases, sentences, and eloquent paragraphs. Then, overrun with joy they pound down the stairs and stumble out into the streets.

Meanwhile the roar of the wind, its raucous sound, brings countless people out of their homes, to see for themselves what’s happening. In Jerusalem at that time there are pious Jews from every nation under heaven and as they too fill the streets. While they stand, looking for the wind, it is then that they hear testimony of Jesus of Nazareth, crucified, died and risen—they hear stories of his words, his deeds, his love and care, but the stories they hear, each one regardless of where she or he, regardless of where they were from, each hears the words and stories in their own native tongue.

Surprised, taken aback, in that wonderful way, when something comforting of home, of our long missed past, slips into our day, they relax into the familiarity of it, so it takes them a few minutes to realize that the amazing stories they're hearing, are being told to them in their native tongue and home language.

From who?

Are these not the Galileans, the poor ones from Galilee who are speaking to us?
And many listened all the closer.

But others, those standing by, refusing to be touched by the spectacle, they are clear, looking around, these ones are drunk. And this is all a bit embarrassing.

“No.” “No,” says Peter, “They are not drunk, its only 9:00 in the morning.”

It's then that Peter, begins to preach his very first sermon. Peter who denied Jesus three times, Peter who has to tell the resurrected Jesus three times how much he loves him, Peter now, filled with the Holy Spirit, forgiven, made more whole than he has ever been before, Peter now quotes to all who are assembled from the prophet Joel of old.

Imagine if you will that you and I are standing on those Jerusalem streets, streets that need ceasefire now so very badly, imagine we are standing on the streets then, that morning and we hear Peter say, quoting the prophet Joel, “God says:

*“I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophecy.
Your young will see visions.
Your elders will dream dreams.
Even upon my servants, [the lowly, the outcast, the lost]
men and women, [all of them]
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
And they will prophecy...
and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

Do you think anyone of the people listening had any idea of all that was come?
Did anyone fully understand, how Christianity would travel well beyond Samaria and Judea, that indeed these few people filled by the power of the Holy Spirit would indeed travel to the ends of the earth. Did they know, those who were watching, looking on—wondering about the drinking habits of the earnestly, odd followers of the crucified man from Nazareth.

That first Pentecost transformed our world and I am convinced that was not a once in the history of the world event. But that rather, Pentecost, the power of being filled by the Holy Spirit is again this day upon us.

So I ask all of us and I ask for all of the little ones and adults who will be baptized this day, and sealed with the power of the Holy Spirit, I ask what dreams are you dreaming, what visions for our world do we dare to share?

We have here in our diocese amazing creativity, wisdom, insight and resources. I long for us to be expansive and audacious in our visions of what could be and how we might work together as people of faith to make our dreams realities. I think we limit our audacity, because we are afraid of being laughed at or failing. But what if we did indeed dream and act.

One dream I have and I imagine many of you share this with me. What if we were able to curtail childhood poverty in our country?
Imagine!

Luke Shaefer, parishioner at St. John's Episcopal Church in Clinton, MI and professor at the University of Michigan, describes how we can do just that in an article in this month's Atlantic. Shaefer who studies poverty, points out that if the temporary Expanded Child Tax Credit contained in the American Rescue Plan, is made permanent then we could cut child poverty in America by 45%.

How's that for a vision and a dream?

Imagine. Imagine a country a community of communities where we saw this assistance to middle and low income families not as a hand out but as a solid thoughtful investment in our country's future. Imagine, if we saw this policy change as an embodiment of Christian faith—a moment when we the people could embody the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost is real. It was then and it is now. What dreams do you dare to have? What visions might we, together dare to share and make real.

Pentecost: Hail Thee Festival Day, Blessed Day that is hallowed forever.

Amen.