

The Day of Pentecost  
"The Holy Spirit Alive in You"  
John 20:19-23 and Acts 2:1-21

There have been quite a few Presidents in our nation's history who have had trouble with the press. One of those presidents was called upon to give a speech in the middle of a dark war. He arrived in a rumpled suit and a dusty hat. He had slept fitfully the night before weighed down by the immense burden of war... as Americans were dying in record numbers. Victory was uncertain.

On the day of the speech, many had gathered to dedicate a national cemetery... a place where thousands had been killed. To be truthful, some officials did not even expect the President to appear. A prominent speaker (now forgotten) was assigned the major speech on the program, The President was given only a small part.

After speaking briefly with the aid of notes jotted on an envelope, the President sat down. Applause was sparse. Major newspapers responded with hostile reviews.

Two papers concluded, "We pass over the silly remarks of the President willing that the veil of oblivion shall be dropped over them that they shall no more be respected or thought of."

The *Chicago Times* editorialized, "The cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads the silly, flat, and dish-watery utterances of the man who has to be pointed out to intelligent foreigners as the President of the United States."

Who was this presidential failure?

Abraham Lincoln had just delivered the best remembered, most eloquent, and thoughtful speech in American history - The Gettysburg Address.

I share this illustration because it answers an important question:  
"How do we know which Presidents have been our greatest leaders?"

The answer is that time will tell. History will be the judge.

The same is true when we look back at another historical event, the event recorded in today's First Reading, from Acts, chapter 2.

Luke reports that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, and eyewitnesses heard them speaking in the native languages of devout Jews who were gathered in Jerusalem, from all around the world. Almost everyone was amazed and perplexed. They were filled with wonder!

But not everyone.

The equivalent of a cynical news media was present.

Luke tells us in verse 13, what their byline in the Jerusalem Times, would've read.

Snearing in contempt, they would have reported that the disciples were merely drunk... "filled with new wine."

But, Peter, standing with the 11, raised his voice and gave this speech,

"Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

"Indeed, these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only 9 o'clock in the morning.

"No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my servants, both men and women... I will pour out my Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

These same disciples who had been hiding behind locked doors for fear of being killed, were now out on the streets of Jerusalem, preaching openly, boldly sharing their faith with anyone who would hear. They knew that they were risking being rounded up, beaten and thrown in prison. They knew that some would criticize them.

Most people would have expected the Roman soldiers to quickly haul them off never to be heard from again, but 2,000 years later, history tells a different story.

So, let me ask you, "What made the difference?"

"What gave the disciples the courage to speak so openly about Jesus?"

Do you remember Jesus' promise in John, chapter 14?

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth."

The reason the disciples could speak with such courage and conviction, is that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was speaking through them. His Spirit was living within them.

"Apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus taught them.

But "if you abide in me, and my Word abides in you... you will bear much fruit."<sup>2</sup>

The same is true today.

There isn't a congregation anywhere that is growing and bearing fruit, unless the pastor and the leaders and members of that congregation are being filled with the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:14-18a

<sup>2</sup> John 15:5b, 7

And guess how that happens?

How do you think the Holy Spirit starts to become real and active in a person's life?

Listen to this:

The fire of the Holy Spirit is kindled first and foremost in the *prayer life* of a congregation.

Samuel Chadwick put it this way:

*"Satan dreads nothing but prayer. His one concern is to keep God's people from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."*

Satan can't stand a congregation that prays.

He has no power over a family when they pray together.

There is no personal crisis that Satan can exploit when we turn to prayer.

Apart from Jesus we can do nothing,  
but when we abide in Him, when ground all we do in prayer,  
we can trust, that God will be at work among us.

But how does that happen how does God go to work in us?

Sam Shoemaker has said that the principal work of the Holy Spirit  
*"is to bring together Truth and experience."*

The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to make the Truth, true to you  
...to make Jesus, real to every believer.  
In other words, to create faith.

That's what the Holy Spirit does in each of us. The Spirit creates and sustains our faith.

That's what the Holy Spirit is doing even right now, filling your mind and your heart with the  
faith to trust and believe that Jesus died for you. Jesus loves and forgives you.  
And Jesus has redeemed your life for a purpose:

To love God with your whole heart, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Take Timothy for example.

When Paul writes to Timothy, he writes with affection about the sincere faith that first lived in  
Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and then in his mother Eunice, and now in Timothy.

But something has happened in the process. The faith that first lived so strongly in his grandmother, is not the same in Timothy.

So Paul then writes to Timothy...

“you’ve received this great gift of faith, but now, I remind you to fan that gift into flame... for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.”<sup>3</sup>

Just as the disciples were powerless...while they hiding behind locked doors, and they needed the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, to give them courage, Paul was also encouraging Timothy to claim the gift of the Holy Spirit and to speak boldly in Jesus’ name.

God made the Truth real to Paul and to Timothy... to Paul, as an adult, and to Timothy, first as a child, and then fanned into flame, as he grew up.

Today, my prayer for each of you, is that Jesus is real in your life.

I pray that the fire of the Holy Spirit is being kindled in your prayer life.

I pray that as Jesus comes to us through His Spirit, we would each speak more openly and boldly about our faith.

I pray that this week you would have faith conversations not only here on the patio after worship, but also throughout the week, wherever you go.

I pray that the Holy Spirit would give you an opportunity to touch someone’s life with an extra measure of kindness.

That you stand out from your co-workers:  
in the way you listen to others  
in the way you don’t participate in gossip  
in the way you do your work with integrity  
and in the hope and joy they see in your life.

Let people wonder what got into you. Let some people criticize you.

So that when the Judge of all history returns, let the record show that you touched someone’s life with the love of Jesus. Amen

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Timothy 1:5-7