

*A New Spirit***Acts 2:1-21****June 8, 9, 2019****Beargrass Christian Church****I. INTRODUCTION.**

- A. A pastor tells about an interesting children's Sunday School lesson.
 1. She asked if they knew what Pentecost was—no one knew.
 2. She said: "Well, Pentecost was the time when the Church had the Holy Spirit rest on them like tongues of fire on their heads.
 3. "Then they spoke the Gospel in all the languages of the world."
 4. Most of the children nodded—like this was a normal event.
 5. I mean...there are apps for that—Duolingo and Babbel—right?
 6. But one little boy was puzzled and perplexed about Pentecost.
 7. With a dazed and amazed look in his eyes, he exclaimed: "Gosh, Pastor—I must have been absent on that Sunday!"
- B. When it comes to this story in Acts 2, I suspect a lot of us feel like that young man—we must have been absent on that day.
 1. Pentecost is not one of the better-known holy-days.
 2. This may be due to the fact that it has escaped commercialism.
 3. There are no Pentecost bunnies or bonnets or baskets.
 4. There are no Pentecost parades or parties or presents.
 5. Hallmark doesn't sell "Happy Pentecost" cards.
 6. Thanksgiving we know, Christmas we know, Easter we know.
 7. But what in the world do we do with this Pentecost story?
 8. And what in the world does it have to do with you and me?

II. IS THERE A PLACE FOR US ON PENTECOST?

- A. The straightforward answer and resounding response is "Yes!"
 1. In terms of its significance in the life of the Church, it ranks right up there with the other major Christian holidays.
 2. Pentecost is often described as the birthday of the Church.
 3. It was the dramatic fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to his disciples that they would be filled with power from on high!
 4. The first Pentecost was an amazing day, complete with more special effects than you'll see in the latest Star Wars movie.
 5. Tongues of fire, mighty winds, empowered people proclaiming God's mighty works in all languages, thousands being baptized!
- B. Speaking of Star Wars, some of you celebrated Star Wars Day.
 1. It happens every year around Derby on the 4th of May.
 2. As in..."May the 4th" be with you!"
- C. Pardon the pun, but it actually works for Pentecost too!
 1. Pentecost was a day when the power of God was revealed.
 2. Today we can say: "May the force of God be with you!"
- D. What makes it even more remarkable is the historical context.
 1. The original Pentecost was not a completely new celebration—it was already one of the great and grand Jewish festivals.
 2. Pentecost means "50th" because it occurs 50 days after Passover.
- E. So, for those of us who believe that timing is everything, we have to admit that God had incredible timing on this one!
 1. Could there have been a better day to give the gift of the Spirit?

2. The Christian Pentecost complemented some powerful memories that were already a part of the faith framework.
 3. Just as there had been wind and fire on the mountain when Moses received the law, now the fire of the Spirit had come!
 4. Just as the people had thanked God for the harvest on this day, now there would be a new harvest of enthusiastic followers!
 5. Some even think it is a reversal of the “Tower of Babel” tale in Genesis 11 when the people of God got puffed up with pride and then lose the ability to communicate.
 6. In Acts 2 God helps everybody understand each other.
 7. (Perhaps we need a little Pentecost on Capitol Hill?)
- F. Now, you may be thinking, “This sounds interesting, but I’m still not sure that this strange story has anything to do with me?”
- G. But it is so important to remember and reflect on our stories.
1. “Hamilton” is here—it tells about our country’s story—and one reviewer said: “It’s not just a moment—it’s about a movement.”
 2. We observed the 75th anniversary of D-Day—it was a critical day for the stories of many nations and people on the planet.
 3. We give thanks for those who were there so we can be here.
- H. And we are grateful for those who gathered on the first Pentecost.
1. It was a pivotal point in the progression of our faith story.
 2. So hang in there—it has a great deal to do with you and me.

III. THIS STORY NEEDS TO BECOME OUR STORY.

- A. There is an ongoing challenge to reclaim the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and within our community of faith.
1. God gave the disciples and new believers a wake-up call.
 2. The external events—the spiritual special effects—helped others see and hear and experience that a God-thing was happening.
 3. But it was the internal change, the Spirit, that gave them power.
 4. Who among us doesn’t need a wake-up call from time to time?
- B. A pastor welcomed some out-of-town guests one weekend.
1. They pulled their new motor home into the church parking lot.
 2. He said: “That’s a beautiful RV—how many does it sleep?”
 3. The owner said: “We really enjoy it. It’ll sleep eight people.”
 4. Then the owner asked: “How many does your sanctuary hold?”
 5. The pastor smiled and said: “Oh, it sleeps about eighty.”
- C. Sometimes we need a wake-up call!
1. When was the last time you emerged from church so joyful and energized that someone accused you of being drunk?
 2. The power of the Holy Spirit can shake us out of our doldrums.
- D. Many of us are tempted to get used to the same old same old.
1. We know of the need to have God breathe new life into us.
 2. We meet people every day that seem to be living in a fog—lonely, forgotten, tired, uninspired, burned-out, bored with life.
 3. They mumble, “Oh, I’m all right—under the circumstances.”
 4. And that’s the problem—they’re under the circumstances—squashed by the load that life has piled upon them.
 5. Most of us have been there—we know what that’s like.
- E. But there’s hope.
1. God still pours out the gift and gifts of the Spirit on us.

2. The power of the Spirit is available—no matter what our situation or condition or circumstances might be.
 3. Often, the Spirit comes gently, giving guidance when we're lost, helping us say the right thing when we don't know what to say.
 4. It provides strength to keep going when we're exhausted and prods us to reach out when we would rather not get involved.
 5. The Comforter, the power and presence of God, helps us get through our trials and tribulations and transitions and tragedies.
- F. Last Monday we had a Board meeting—and a little Pentecost broke out.
1. It has been great to welcome Rev. Rob to the staff.
 2. He has not been with us a full year yet, so every time he shares comments at a gathering he often adds a “Wow!” because of something new he has witnessed.
 3. He reminds us of the great things God is doing in this place.
 4. He inspires us to stay awake and not take them for granted.
 5. So as others offered highlights and updates about our mission and ministries last Monday, the “Wow!” became contagious!
- G. The image of fire in the story also reminds me of the Olympic Games.
1. There are some parallels between the games and Pentecost.
 2. Can you believe that they are already taking applications for torch bearers for the 2020 summer Olympic Games in Tokyo?
 3. The “handover” ceremony happens in Greece on March 19.
 4. The flame will be flown to Japan and then begin a journey of over 120 days until it arrives for the opening ceremony.
 5. People of different ages and stages, races and religions, will be brought together by a common goal and purpose and dream.
 6. The global gathering seems a little like Pentecost to me.
 7. Surely, God is in it—bringing people together for higher goals, bringing unity out of diversity, breaking down barriers.
- H. Some of you may remember that the children of Israel carried fire as they traveled with Moses to the Promised Land.
1. It was “kindled from heaven”—a reminder of God's presence.
 2. That same fire lit up the disciples and thousands of new believers at Pentecost; they were the new keepers of the flame.
- I. And that's who we are today—God's people who are passing the torch to the next generation—bearing the Spirit's fire in our hearts.
1. We are in a marathon that started long before we arrived.
 2. And it will continue to keep going long after we're gone.
- J. This will be one of our major emphases this summer.
1. Our worship themes will focus on gifts of the Spirit.
 2. A Bible study will be offered called “Fresh Encounter: Experiencing God's Power for Spiritual Awakening.”
 3. Beginning July 1 we will offer a “Summer Stretch: An Exercise in Spiritual Practices” with daily e-devotions and reflections.
 4. The church will leave the building and get out of the city, out of the state and out of the country for camps and mission trips.
 5. With our new purpose statement and goals, the Spirit will help us discern and prioritize strategies for more effective ministry.
- K. We are called to help make Pentecost happen again and again.
1. We seek to be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.
 2. We will maintain our commitment to having an Open Table.

3. Surely God will send the fresh winds of the Spirit...
4. But we have to open our minds and hearts...our hands and ears and mouths...
 - a. Even as we wait...and work for peace and reconciliation...
 - b. Even as we wait...and work for an end to war and terrorism...
 - c. Even as we wait...and work for an end to hunger and poverty, justice, and relief for suffering children on too many borders...
 - d. We pray for another Pentecost.
- L. Some of you have heard about two-year-old Samantha Savitz—Steve Hartman told her story.
 1. When she was born, neighbors brought food and gifts.
 2. But after a while, Sam's parents were told that she was deaf.
 3. That's when their neighbors did another remarkable thing.
 4. They hired an instructor so they could all learn sign language.
 5. The teacher said: "Sam has a full community that's signing and communicating with her and her family—it's a beautiful story."
 6. And he says: "This level of inclusion from the 'village' will almost certainly guarantee a happier, more well-adjusted Sam."
 7. What a gift of love—to learn each other's language!
- M. It sounds a little like God's gift of love at Pentecost.
 1. We dream of that day when all God's people from all over the world will hear the mighty works of God in their own tongue.
 2. We long for the time when God's Spirit will be poured out on all people—when everyone will call upon the name of the Lord.
 3. Until that time we pray... "Come, Holy Spirit, come!"