

June 9, 2019

Adopted by God

Prayer

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto thee, O Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon

So today, we celebrate the Feast Day of Pentecost. It is also known as the birthday of the church because it is the day when the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples, the apostles, almost in a bodily form. It's described as tongues of fire. And this is a time when the disciples move from who they have been, to who they had been called to be. This is a time when the fear that the disciples still held in their lives because of their following of Jesus and because of Jesus' crucifixion, it's taken away and moved from trying to understand who God is and who Jesus was and what they are called to be, to a new understanding.

And after the giving of the Holy Spirit, they immediately begin to proclaim the mighty works and the mighty acts of God. And that is the epitome of what the Holy Spirit is about. It takes away from those who receive it or will, is able to take away from those who receive it, fear. Takes away those things that keep us from being present, being in relationship fully with God because there is no longer a separation.

Up until this time, the people saw God or understood God to be out there somewhere, that God was a Creator, that God had made a covenant with a certain people, but God was still not here, not really present. It was always kind of a wonder that God is out there somewhere. In Jesus, God moved a little bit closer.

As Jesus proclaims that as He is talking to Philip, you know the Father and I are one. You know, He's talking to all of His disciples. He's preparing for Him to be leaving them, but they still wonder. They still have God out there somewhere and Jesus is trying to say, "If you see me, if you listen to the words that I'm speaking, then you've seen and heard the Father because everything I do is from the Father. The Father is in me and I am in the Father. We had a relationship where the very presence of God is right here before you."

Now, it was still outside of the apostles, the disciples. But they should have been able to see and know and understand a little more clearly who God is and what God is about; by listening to the words of Jesus, by seeing the works that Jesus did as He embraced everyone, the sinners and the righteous alike, the words He gave about repentance and forgiveness, the actions he showed to embrace those people who were broken and make them whole again. Philip, you should know by the words and if not the words, the actions that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

But he goes on to say that something is coming. I am going to the Father. You should probably rejoice in that because once I am there, then I will ask the Father. He will send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit and then it won't be anymore, Me here, you here and God out there somewhere. God chooses to dwell with you and in you just as the Father dwells in Jesus.

So we're no longer reaching out to try to find God out there somewhere. We now have the opportunity to receive the very Spirit of God into each life. That's what we see in the early church, and as the disciples received the Holy Spirit and it changed their lives, so those who were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, receive that Holy Spirit. It became a part of them in the early church. It seemed to be a little more manifest that lives began to change very, very quickly. Of course, they were moving from a place of belief in a different way, in a different thing, and coming to believe in the God that we worship.

And that God has made that statement and has come to dwell in them. And their lives were changed fairly dramatically. For most of us who have been baptized and who have received the Holy Spirit, and you have received the Holy Spirit. If you had been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not because you are worthy and not because the church in which you were baptized or the priest that performed the baptism did an exceptional job. It's because it's God's promise to us. I will be present with you. "I will send the Holy Spirit," Jesus says, "and He will be a part of you."

You will know of it longer. Don't let your hearts be afraid anymore. That's what happens in baptism because that's the promise of God. We don't see the great change so many times because we're often baptizing infants. We don't usually see a great showing of power in the Holy Spirit, even in baptizing older children or adults. Because there is a sense and a knowledge and an understanding, at least in our country, who Jesus is and what Jesus was about, who God is and what God is about.

And so what we receive in baptism is often very subtle. Cooper, when you're baptized, I don't expect you to start speaking in tongues. But if you do, we will all be very excited. That's kind of a joke. They're not laughing, so you should be. What we will see is someone being adopted as a son by God. Just like Paul was saying in his letter to the Romans. This is how he understands what's going on in baptism, that we become adopted children of God. And as such, God promises to dwell in us, to help us to learn, to know, to understand what God is about.

To begin to lead us to live out being a son or daughter of God in the living out of our lives, in the words that we speak, in the relationships that we have both with God and with the people around us. It is that Holy Spirit that helps us to not be afraid and to reach out our hands in love, to be generous with the blessings that we have received, to be able to go out and to speak with a voice that says, "I believe in God and I believe that God has changed creation."

And that we are each called to live our lives in peace and in unity and in love for one another. And I will not allow the fears of the world, the fears that are shared, the fears that try to move us away from relationship, to hide away. I will not allow that to be the voice that I have. My voice will be the voice of the Holy Spirit leading me and saying, "You are a child of God as well. God loves you as much as God loves me." And I want you to know that because you are a child of God, we can live in peace together.

We don't have to hate one another. We don't have to be afraid of one another. We have the opportunity to live together in justice and peace. And when we do that, all people may become children of God. All people might have enough in their lives, enough shelter, enough food, enough clean water and enough resources to live life and to live it joyfully. To learn from the Holy Spirit how to reach across the barriers in the lines that are often drawn between one society and another, one religion and another.

To reach across and say, "We will not let what has come before direct what is coming now. You have the opportunity to learn from the Holy Spirit, to be open, to listen to that Voice that calls you to care when others may not; to be just when others may not be. To be kind when others may not be. Each of us already has that call. If you have been baptized, you have that calling. And we need to raise our voices in languages that everyone can understand, that God's way is a way of love. It's a way of peace. And I will walk that way no matter what's going on in the world.

And I will call others to walk that way as well. Also in this time of baptism, those of you who have been baptized into the body of Christ, who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever, you will be asked to support Cooper in his life in Christ as he begins it this day. Help him. Show him the way of kindness and love. Show him the way of justice and mercy. Show him the way of Jesus and help him walk that path.