

Sermon for Sunday, May 23, 2021 - "The In-Dwelling of the Holy Spirit"

The Day of Pentecost
Last Sunday of Easter
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Vicar Kathryn Thompson

Beloved of God, grace, peace, and the power of the Holy Spirit be with you this day and every day. Amen.

I wonder when you last had a moment of pause in creation. Maybe it was taking the time to pause next to the river to hear the sound of the water flowing. Perhaps it was listening to the sound of the birds singing after the rain cleared this week. Or, maybe it was the feel of the spring breeze through your hair as your scalp lifted in sensation. What was the most recent moment you had where you were drawn into the awareness of a presence - a presence beyond your *own* awareness.

In our daily comings and goings, the Spirit is present always and is with us as God personally present in our lives. The Spirit is there whether we have an awareness of it or not. And while we know that the Spirit comes to specific individuals for specific tasks for a specific duration of time, I am most interested in pondering, on this Pentecost Sunday, the deep knowledge of the Spirit that comes and stays and dwells.

The Spirit comes to us first and foremost in creation. It brings to life all of creation, as "the wind of God that swept over the face of the waters" in Genesis 1: 2. So, too, is the Spirit in creation of our very own beings. God breathed life into you at the moment of creation. From matter - from dirt and mud and clay - came humankind, living beings formed from the breath of God who breathed life into our bones, our lungs, our emotions, our minds, our hearts.

This is also mirrored in the Psalm for today, which says: "29When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. 30When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground."

The fullness of who we are created to be was formed in the Spirit. It is there at our earthly beginning and at our earthly end - in the draw of our first breath and the release of our last. At any given moment in time, the Spirit is as close as our breath, accessible to us in our created being as the presence of God. It has the power to send us out as far and wide as the winds that move through the cosmos. It has the humbleness to remind us that God is present not only in our joy, but also in our pain and in our sorrow, in our grief, and in our sadness.

It is the Spirit that is there in your created being as you move through the Wilderness times of your life. Those times when we would much rather go it alone. We'd much rather rely on our mechanisms of survival. We'd much rather "just get through it." But, it is the Spirit that is there in that moment to

make sure that our life does not go stagnant, does not dry up or go sour. For even when we don't feel the Spirit, it is there Advocating on our behalf -- moving our life in ways beyond our knowing in these shadowed times, interceding with sighs too deep for words, and moving our life toward relationship with God.

It is the Spirit that is there at the crossroads times in our lives, when life decisions rest on our shoulders like a burden we aren't sure we can bear. In those moments, when clarity seems out of reach and the consequences of our action or inaction confound us, the Spirit is present to testify to the truth, to guide us to the gentle knowing of our created beings that were formed in God. In these moments, we rest in the assurance that God will never ask of us something that isn't consistent with who we are created to be in the image of God.

It is the Spirit that is there when we long for something more concrete in our lives. Much like the disciples in today's passage, we often long to grasp on to something real and tangible. All we want are answers, and all we desire is understanding. When our human minds search for the explainable, the Spirit is present to remind us that our faith is more than answers, our faith is more than understanding, our faith is more than grasping. Our faith is more than our brain. It is heart and soul; it is trust and doubt; it is comfort; and it is challenge. It is full of the great Mystery.

It is the Spirit that is here with us in community. Just as the Spirit was with the early church, as portrayed in the Acts passage today, the Spirit is here with us in the 21st century church today. The Spirit is moving and acting in new and varied ways now, relevant for our time and place in the story of history. But it has never and will never stop asking us to show up for the oppressed, speak out for the marginalized, and fiercely defend the creation that God so loves. As we seek to be church in the world, we open ourselves to the power of the Spirit in and through us to fulfill our baptismal promise: to work for peace and justice for all of creation.

It is the Spirit that is present with us in silence. It sits by our bedside or with us by the bedsides of those we love, holding the liminal space between this world and the next.

It is the Spirit that carries our prayers, connects us in love, and holds us in care.

We need not wait for the Spirit to come. We need not wait for Pentecost Sunday to experience the presence of the Spirit with us. When we look out into the world and when we look into our lives, we need only to put on our spiritual lens in order to be able to see the power of the Spirit at work. Sometimes that lens comes in the form of hindsight, a pure 20/20 vision of that which we could not see in the moment. And sometimes that lens comes from a moment of pause where you felt a presence from beyond.

The Spirit is with you. It is not a gift from God, but rather it *is* God -- fully and relationally present in your life, now and always.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.