

"Act With Power"

ACT UP - Small Group Campaign Fall 2017

October 1, 2017

North East United Methodist Church

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When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

-Acts 2:1-11 NASB

Jesus had died. Jesus had been nailed to a cross. Jesus had been laid in the tomb, the rock rolled across the entrance. Then on Easter morning, the women found the tomb empty and soon, the risen Jesus appeared to His disciples.

Before He would once again leave them...before His ascension into heaven...Jesus spoke to His disciples and urged them to go to Jerusalem and wait...to wait in Jerusalem...to wait and soon the Holy Spirit would come and fill them with power from heaven.

Acts 1:4-5 - "*Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

Then Jesus led the disciples to Bethany where they saw Him ascend to heaven.

Acts 1:8-9 - "*...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and*

Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Luke reports that the disciples then returned to the city as Christ had commanded and over the next week were in the Temple continually praising God, worshipping, singing, lifting their hearts in prayer.

Then...we read in Acts 2:1 - ***"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place."***

There were three great Jewish festivals which every male Jew living within twenty miles of Jerusalem had to participate in. These were the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Pentecost means *"the Fiftieth"*...Pentecost fell on the fiftieth day after the Passover...The feast was significant because it commemorated God giving the law, the Ten Commandments, to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was also a time when two loaves, the first fruits of the harvest, were offered in gratitude to God for the safe gathering of the harvest. It was a day when the law stated, Leviticus 23:21, people should be off from their everyday work so the streets of Jerusalem would be crowded.

People from throughout...from Mesopotamia, Asia, Egypt, Rome, and Judea...many would travel to Jerusalem for this celebration...this remembrance...this annual pilgrimage...

Jesus' followers have gathered in Jerusalem...they have gone there to do as Jesus asked...to wait...to *"wait for what the Father had promised"*...There are about 120 persons gathered together...both men and women...

And in that moment, the same wind that blew in the beginning...Genesis 1:1-2 - *"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters."*...the same wind of God that blew in the beginning blows in a mighty way on the day of Pentecost...God is still creating...

Vs. 2-4 - ***"And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance..."***



“Pentecost” by Jean Restout II, 1732

V. 3 - *"And there appeared to them tongues..."*

The Holy Spirit appears in the shape of "tongues"..."tongues" represent speech and it is after the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples and Peter that the Word is spoken to an international audience in Jerusalem...Having denied he even knew Jesus just a few weeks before, Peter stands up in front of the very men who condemned Jesus to death and speaks boldly...filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter speaks without fear...He speaks of Christ...He speaks of judgment and salvation...He speaks of sin and forgiveness...He speaks of death and resurrection...He shouts that God has invaded...Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah spoken about by the prophets of old...

V. 3 - *"And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them."*



And why did the Holy Spirit appear in the form of "tongues of fire"...Fire has a purifying presence; it burns away the undesirable elements of our lives...There is so much within us...bad habits, unbelief, addictions, anger, bitterness, selfishness, idols...so many things that need to be "burned away" that we might be open to receive the Holy Spirit...that we might be free to serve others, to build the kingdom, to impact the world for Christ...



V. 4 - *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues..."*

The disciples...Jesus' followers...men and women...filled with God's Holy Spirit...begin to speak the languages of the many people visiting Jerusalem that day...telling them about the glories of God in their own languages.

V. 6-8 - *"And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?"*

Suddenly the church is born...where strangers just stood, a community is created...the Spirit of God blows and the message of Christ goes out and people are unified as one...united in love...barriers are broken...the message of God's love through Jesus Christ is translated for all...including you and I...including our children...our neighbors...for those who live near and far...including those who are very different from us...It is the Spirit of God that does this...

Over three thousand accept Christ in the streets of Jerusalem that day...

God sent His Spirit to live within those who believe in His Son, Jesus...to encourage them...empower them...convict and challenge them...to mold them into the likeness of the One they follow.

If you believe in Jesus...If you believe in God's Son...if you have put your faith in Him...the Spirit of God has come to live within you...

Paul explains further, Ephesians 1:13-14, *"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our*

inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Paul asks, I Corinthians 3:16, *"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"*

The problem is just because the Holy Spirit lives within us does not mean we are connected to the Holy Spirit...just because the Holy Spirit lives within us does not mean we have given the Holy Spirit control.

I remember a story about a woman in Ireland who was very frugal...people were really surprised when she was the first in the village to put electricity in her home...a few months later the gentleman from the electric company stopped by to read the meter...he paused and then walked up and knocked on the door...the woman came to the door and the man asked her, *"Is everything alright with your power...your meter shows very little usage."* The woman replied, *"Everything is wonderful...every night I turn on my lights to light my candles and then turn them off."*

Here is a woman who is plugged into the power but is not using it.

Perhaps the question that we should ask today is: If we are not seeing strangers becoming friends...if we are not seeing barriers broken...if we are not seeing God's message of love through Jesus Christ going out, changing lives...if we are not being emboldened to share God's love, to serve...if we are not experiencing the Spirit of God in our lives... perhaps the question that we should ask today is: Why?

One reason might be that **we are not yearning to be filled with God's Holy Spirit**...we are content with the way our lives are...

Jim Cymbala, in his book, Fresh Power, writes, *"Some of us apparently are of the opinion that we are basically doing okay in our spiritual life and church life. We don't sense any urgent need for a deeper work of the Holy Spirit. The truth is, we are not really thirsty for the water of the Spirit. There is no sense of discontent, of wanting, of need."*

In other words, we are comfortable where we are...we don't understand what is possible...what we are missing...

A second reason might be that **we are too filled with things of this world**...there

is no room for the Holy Spirit in our lives...

The famous evangelist D.L Moody said, *"I believe firmly that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and everything that is contrary to God's law, the Holy Spirit will fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. We must be emptied before we can be filled."*

Or perhaps we have failed to realize that...you and I...**we have failed to realize that we are "leaky vessels" ...**

D.L. Moody once preached in New York and said, *"God has got a good many children who have just barely got life (they have accepted Christ), but have no power for service...A great many think because they have been filled once, they are going to be full for all time after, but O, my friends, we are leaky vessels, and have to be kept right under the fountain all the time in order to keep full...Let us keep near Him."*

So perhaps you and I are not experiencing Pentecost today because we are either content with where we are and not realizing where we could be...or we are too full of the things of this world to allow any room for the Holy Spirit...or we have failed to recognize that if we are to live, filled with God's Spirit, we must remain connected for we are indeed *"leaky vessels"*...

God's Holy Spirit is alive and well and at work all around us. We do not want to miss it.

On March 19, 1995, at Wheaton College in Illinois, at 7:30 pm, there was a weekly meeting in the chapel on campus.



Two students from another University, James Hahn and Brandi Maguire spoke

about a recent "revival" on their campus. Following their presentation, the microphones were open for students to share their burdens and confess their sins.

Stephen Kellough, the chaplain at the time, writes, *"Confessions were heard throughout the night. There were tears and there were smiles. There was crying and there was singing. People confessed their sins to God and to each other, and there was healing. It was biblical. It was Christian, It was orderly. It was sincere. It honored our Lord. Finally, at 6:00 A.M., we adjourned the meeting, with students still in line who had waited hours to speak."*

Wheaton College reconvened the gathering on Monday and 900 students showed up, staying until 2 AM, many still lined up at the microphone to give their confessions. Tuesday, 1350 students...Wednesday, 1500 students...Thursday, even more...hundreds accepted Christ...dozens committed to full-time ministry...dozens traveled to other colleges and shared what had happened during this amazing week...a week when God prompted a miraculous surge of conviction and confession of sin, genuine repentance and forgiveness, and the restoration of broken hearts and relationships.

A modern-day Pentecost...The Holy Spirit at work...

What about what happened in Cali, Columbia...

In 1995, Cali, Columbia was known as the drug Capitol of the world...it was a city filled with violence...up to 15 murders a day...

A young pastor, Julio Ruibal, and his wife, came to Columbia and began to call people to pray...believing that if people prayed the enemy's grip on Cali would be broken...Julio brought the pastors together...called for unity...called for prayer...and it was decided to assemble people for a worship and prayer meeting...

In 1995, they had their first all-night prayer meeting in Cali and after this event...only ten days later...the first drug lord fell...

Next, they rented the largest venue in the city...the 55,000 seat soccer stadium...



60,000 believers showed up and prayed all-night...every 90 days they held an all-night prayer vigil, praying against principalities and powers...praying for unity...praying for Jesus to take their city...in the first nine months of these prayer vigils, 6 of the 7 top drug lords in Cali fell...

It was then that Julio was killed by two hitman outside his church...at the funeral the pastors of Cali...many of whom had never spoken to one another...came together and made a covenant of unity...a covenant held by over 200 pastors and churches today...

Within the last few years the entire Cali soccer team has been born again...the football stadium is now too small for the city's prayer vigils which have grown to over 80,000 people...these all-night prayer vigils have been happening every 90 days since 1995...recently the first Christian television station in the nation of Columbia began in Cali...furthermore, revival has broken out in a dozen towns and cities neighboring the city...

V. 2-4 - "And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance..."

We are on the other side of Pentecost...we no longer have to wait with anticipation for what is to come...Jesus has left us the Holy Spirit...

But we must seek after it daily...we must see our need, desire something greater, push out the things of the world to make room for the Spirit to fill our lives...allowing the Spirit to move us, to change us, to transform us from disconnected and "lukewarm" to an intimacy with the Savior and a burning fire within us to serve God...

We must stay close to God for we are indeed "leaky vessels" and if we stray too far away from our Creator we will find ourselves empty of God, filling the void once

more with the world...

How do we experience Pentecost today?

1. **Pray Daily/Desire The Holy Spirit**. Spend time with God in quiet prayer and ask Him to send the Holy Spirit upon you. Confess, repent, cry out, desire after God.
2. **Read the Bible**. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit cloaks the one who immerses him or herself in God's Word. To tap into the Holy Spirit you have to know the heart of God.
3. **Fellowship With Other Believers**. The Lord says in Matthew 18:20, "*For where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.*" The Holy Spirit descends upon people who have convened together to praise God's name and to study His Word.
4. **Love, Give, Serve, Forgive...Step Out Of Your Comfort Zone**. Many times when we are called to love others, give sacrificially, serve in a ministry, or forgive someone who has hurt us...when we take on a God-sized task or step out of our comfort zone...we have to lean on the Holy Spirit for the words, the strength, the ability to love and to forgive...When we lean on the Holy Spirit to help us we get to know the Holy Spirit personally and intimately.
5. **Test Yourself** – The scriptures make it clear how we can tell if the Holy Spirit is guiding our thoughts and actions. In any given situation, if the Holy Spirit is at work in us then we will exhibit fruit. The "*fruits of the Holy Spirit*" are "*love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*" (Galatians 5:22-23).



Otto van Veen c. 1556-1629 Brussels

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And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance..."

May the same be said of us.