

Text: Acts 2:1-21
Date: Sunday, June 4-2006 Pentecost Sunday
Location: Zion Lutheran Church- North Battleford, SK.
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Grace and Peace be unto you from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

One of my most cherished memories of childhood is going with my dad to visit his dental office. For a young boy like me, walking into his office was like walking into another world. The chairs, the desks, the tools, the smells of chemicals- everything was different.

Often the times that I would go with my father to his dental studio was for "after hours" emergencies. And it was here during these evening emergencies that I would see my father at work.

I was impressed. My dad had whirling tools, big lights, electric chairs, and even an X-ray machine! After the patient had left and dad and I were left alone in the office, I would quiz him as to what these unique things that I saw were. What does this machine do? How does this chair work? How fast does the drill go? These were the questions of a curious child.

Dad was patient. He would try to answer my questions the best could- after all, he was talking to a six-year-old! Dad would try to explain how the air drill worked, what made an X-ray dangerous, and how his tools were precision instruments and not designed to be the toys of an idle six-year-old.

While these thoughtful explanations were all fine and dandy, I wanted to know what these neat toys did! "Dad, can I try it?" I would often ask. Usually he would say, "Yes...", and that is when everything started to make sense. Truth be known, sometimes it is only by doing that you can really make sense out of something.

We live a society that gauges the importance of something by the value of what it can produce. Concern for function even attaches value to how we "measure up" people. Think about it: What is one of the first questions that we ask new people as we are getting to know them? "What do you do?" If they say that they do something impressive, we are impressed. However, if they say something ordinary, we judge them to be ordinary. As a society, as a world, we care a lot about the supposed "value" of what things and people can produce and do.

I think that same kind of question often exists in our faith. The questions "What can God do for me?" or "Why go to church?" are ones that I have heard many times before.

In reading today's account of the Pentecost, I can imagine that these questions were very much alive in the hearts and minds of those 120 souls who witnessed the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on the glorious day of Pentecost. Think about who these people were. One hundred and twenty followers of Jesus were gathered in somebody's upstairs room during the days prior to Pentecost, praying and waiting on God to do something. Many of them had staked their lives on the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. They believed Him to be Messiah, but those hopes were crushed barely 50 days prior, when Jesus was crucified. But then, resurrection! And then 40 amazing days when the risen Jesus appeared to them on many occasions between Easter and His ascension into heaven. Those must have been amazing experiences. Then suddenly one day, Jesus said, "I'm going away and I want you to wait here until you receive the power of the Holy Spirit." And He left. Taken up in a cloud into heaven. The group did follow His instructions. They went back into the city and gathered in a borrowed, upstairs room. And they waited. For 10 days they waited and prayed and talked and waited some more.

Imagine with me what must of have been going through the minds of those earlier followers of Christ. Jesus had taught them, performed great miracles, and did amazing things. But now, it would appear to them that Christ was no longer with them. I am sure that many of them now asked (at least privately), "But now what?" or "What are we to do now?" These disciples needed something. They needed to know that what Christ had started with them was not finished. They needed a miracle...

Our lesson this morning from the second chapter of Acts is an account of the miracle that God sent to these disciples- and his whole Christian church. As they were praying and waiting together, suddenly there was a violent wind, and tongues of fire, and they were speaking languages they had not learned. What an exhilarating and yet almost frightening moment it must have been, for all of these symbols were signs of the divine presence in their midst. The wind, a sign of power. The fire, a sign of purity. Tongues, for the purpose of proclamation. On this day called Pentecost, which they would never forget, they had been touched and filled with the very presence and spirit of Christ himself. That's what God

wanted to do all along. God has always wanted our relationship to Him to be so much more than a set of rituals we go through or a list of in which doctrines we believe. God has always wanted to be in us, to take up residence in our hearts and restore us to His original dream of who we would be.

As Christians it is important for us to realize that Pentecost is not a “one time event”. Rather, in this miraculous occurrence God is saying to us (through his Holy Spirit) that he wants to take up residence in us, he wants to live in us, he wants to fill us, and he wants to empower us.

But to what end? What does God want to do all of these things in us?

He wants us to live as Christ in this world. He wants us to love our neighbour, he wants us to work on behalf of the poor and marginalized, he wants us to share the gospel with others. This is what Pentecost is about for us.

Our church needs to live in the power of proclamation. That is our mission. And if we are not allowing the Holy Spirit to empower us for witness, then nothing else we do as a church will matter anyway. If we fail in our mission as a church, it will not be because of a lack of ministries. It won't be a lack of leadership. It won't be a lack of finances. It won't be a marketing problem or an image problem. If we fail, it will be a failure to allow the Holy Spirit to move us and empower us as proclaimers of the gospel to our world.

Friends. What are we doing? We need to ask, “As a church what are we doing?”

We have lots of activity. Our calendar is full of events and happenings. Many people come for worship every Sunday. Numbers thankfully are growing. We have programs for children, teens, and adults. Like my father's dental office, the machinery is pretty impressive. There are many moving parts and blinking lights. But, we must always ask, “What does it do?” and “What difference does it make?”

The truth of the matter is that many times we don't do enough. Many times we don't make a big enough difference. And there are times when we don't let God's Holy Spirit break-through.

But then there are times that we get it right. When we pray, when we listen, when act in love. And these are the times that we are most fully church. These are the times that we are most fulfilling living out our baptismal calling.

And today- The Day of Pentecost- we are called to see clearly the source and power of it all.

Amen

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