

## **Sermon for May 24, 2015**

Today is Pentecost Sunday the day that we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to the world and the beginning of the church. In our Gospel reading today the word that Jesus uses to describe the Spirit is Paraclete. It has a range of meanings including advocate, encourager, comforter, and helper. Many times we like to think of the Spirit as a comforter because it has a warm, fuzzy feeling surrounding it; just like those comforters we gave out last week to our graduates.

Yes, in part of our reading from John today the Spirit is comforting the disciples whose hearts are filled with sorrow at the thought of Jesus leaving them. They feel abandoned and distressed at the thought of being on their own. They need a comforter and an advocate.

But let's look at one of the other readings for today. In our Acts reading the Spirit is anything but comforting. First the Spirit shows up as a violent, mighty wind that fills the inside of their house. Here in Minnesota we call that a tornado and we head for the basement. We don't wait around to see what's going to happen! And then if that isn't enough each of the disciples has tongues of fire on top of their heads. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and that fire burned into their souls and sent them into the streets of Jerusalem to proclaim the crucified Jesus resurrected by the power of God.

Now to proclaim this fact at the very least would get them beaten and imprisoned and at the very most it would get them crucified as well. But they couldn't help themselves; they had to do it. Something from deep within them was pushing them out to witness. But that's not all—they could do it in all of the

languages of the people that were in Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival.

Remember most of these disciples are fishermen with little to no education—certainly none in foreign languages and here they are speaking them fluently!

This doesn't sound very comforting to me and it wasn't to the crowds either. They are described as being bewildered, amazed and astonished at the fact that they could understand what these Galileans were saying. Some in the crowd were so uncomfortable with what they were hearing they had to joke about it saying that the disciples must be drunk on new wine.

But Jesus did tell the disciples that when the Spirit came; it would guide them. So I think that the Holy Spirit's comforting is to walk along side of us to encourage and to help us to go out into the world and do things that we would not normally do; things that are scary for us to do; things that are way out of our comfort zones. After Pentecost the disciples leave Jerusalem and go out into the world to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. Along the way they are persecuted, beaten, imprisoned and according to tradition all except for John meet a martyr's death. This is quite different from the group of scared men huddled together behind locked doors right after Jesus' death.

But the Holy Spirit is also here to guide and walk along beside us as we go out into the world. Many times what the Spirit calls us to do is scary and not what we feel comfortable doing. For me it was the call from the Spirit to go to seminary. I fought for a long time because I knew what the end result would be—me being a pastor. Talk about being out of your comfort zone! To paraphrase

Leonard Hofstadter from the Big Bang Theory: “I was perfectly happy being an organist and teaching confirmation, but you wouldn’t leave me alone!”

Let me give you a few examples of what makes me uncomfortable: speaking in front of people, making small talk with people I don’t know, and most of all—leading God’s church into an uncertain and ever-changing future. But the Spirit is persistent and like those disciples at the first Pentecost; I had a fire burning within me that I couldn’t ignore. Now with the help of you and the Holy Spirit I’m learning what it means to be a pastor; how to be less uncomfortable.

So what is the Spirit calling you to do that is out of your comfort zone? Are you being called to lead a Bible study, join a committee or start a new ministry at Calvary, to lead a devotion or tell someone you know about your faith in Jesus? Might we fail? Yes, but we might also succeed and sometimes that’s more frightening than failure. Whatever you may be called to do; remember that the Holy Spirit is here walking beside you guiding you, encouraging you, helping you and even comforting you as you do what you never thought you would do!