

Pentecost
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

On July 4th, 1776, while the delegates signed the declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, King George was making an entry in his diary. On July 4th, 1776, King George of England, wrote "Nothing of any importance happened today." Obviously July 4th meant nothing to him as well as to much of the rest of the world including most people in the 13 original colonies. Only to those founding fathers, the delegates to the continental congress, who signed that document that day, did July 4th stick out as a pivotal moment in their lives. Of course years later July 4th became a day of importance to remember as the birth of a nation. Only years later as the story was retold and the freedom was won, did the people celebrate. And now each year we remember it as a day of great importance despite what King George might have thought about the day.

May 23rd, 2010 is the same way. Today is Pentecost. In the year 30 A.D. or 33 A.D. a group of followers of a man named Jesus were gathered together in one city named Jerusalem. Suddenly the Spirit of God filled each one of them and marked them with tongues of fire. On that day the church was born. But no historian would have marked that day as special in the Roman Empire. Jerusalem and its people were a distant, rebellious, territory of their vast empire. Only the writer Luke years later writing to a friend about what happened to the early disciples, tells what happened on this day, nearly 2000 years ago. Only Luke mentions that a group of ordinary, uneducated, back-woods, rag tag bunch of fishermen, housewives, farmers, merchants, an ex-tax collector and perhaps servants and slaves suddenly in a instant become the church of God. A church that has lasted for 2000 years. This was a movement of a handful of people that were originally just viewed as a Jewish splinter sect of believers that within 300 years become the legal religion of the entire Empire. From these original people gathered in that room and by the power of the Holy Spirit, countless billions of people have come to believe and know Jesus Christ.

How did they do it? How did this untrained, coarse, common group change the world? What happened to those followers on that day that empowered them, changed them, enflamed them with a passion and knowledge way beyond their ability.

First of all they came into contact with the unknown God, the Holy Spirit. They were filled with the very presence of God's Spirit, the very breath of God, that same breath that goes forth and gives us life and fills us with faith. Those disciples had known God, they had heard the

priests talk about God the creator and the judge. God the all powerful and the worth of God that would come upon all people on judgment day. They knew of this God and believed. These same disciples had known Jesus, the son of God, God incarnate in human form. They had gotten to see God in another form, as human, as the living sacrifice who took upon himself the sins of the world. They had eaten with him and talked with him and seen his miracles, his death and his resurrection. They had been in the presence of God, in the Son for 3 years. They knew God. But not until this very moment, not until the Spirit of God, rushed down upon them and filled that room filling them with new understanding and deeper faith did they know God's very presence in themselves. Not until this very moment of Pentecost did these men and women become one with God. In Baptism we believe that we are given that same gift. Today we celebrate a Baptism and pray that the Holy Spirit will come upon Braydon and fill him in this life, giving him peace and faith in God's kingdom now and always. This is the same Spirit that you received and were given as a child of God granting you hope and forgiveness, claiming you as being in God's family. That Spirit, that very presence of God is with you always in you and guiding you in your faith.

This gift of the Spirit also gave them hope. Remember these are the same men who just fifty days ago had fled from the crucifixion, locked themselves away for fear of their own deaths at the hands of the Jewish leaders. The Sanhedrin had thought they had won. Jesus the one causing people to question their understanding of religion was dead and buried and they had silenced his followers. Well almost, for the last 40 days these Jewish leaders had been hearing stories, rumors, talks that this Jesus they had killed was really alive, beyond death, beyond the control of this world. They had to put an end to it before it got out of hand, they had to make the disciples fearful and scared to openly go about preaching and teaching. Now fifty days after that event it was next big Jewish holiday since the Passover, the holiday of Pentecost, the wheat harvest festival which was critical to a society based on agriculture. Jerusalem would be crowded once again, people from all over the nation and the empire would be present, making pilgrimages to worship in the temple of Jerusalem, to give thanks for the harvest and celebrate the week long festivities. And instead of being able to contain and squash the hope of these disciples, the religious leaders hear reports that they are out on the streets speaking and preaching in foreign languages, preaching about fulfillment of the prophets, that God is at hand. They had been given new hope by the Spirit to overcome their fears.

And finally they had been able to trust in this gift of the Holy Spirit. They went forth no longer fearful but moved by the Spirit to speak in languages they did not know. They did things they had not done before, things never heard of or tried by people of faith, they proclaimed in

palaces and in prisons, on mountains and in cities that Jesus is Lord. They went out into the world to places they had never been just to share the Gospel news that Jesus Christ has given each person forgiveness of sins and a place in God's kingdom. They trusted in the movement of the Holy Spirit to guide them even handing over their lives for the sake of the Gospel. That's trust.

To much of the world, that first Pentecost could have been explained as nothing important happening that day. But in that place on that day the world was changed. And we are called on today, this Pentecost to continue in that same mission, to be filled with the Presence of God, the Holy Spirit that is with us and in us now, to place our hope in this gift and to trust that this gift of God with us will guide us always as a child of God. Open yourselves to God this day, receive the Holy Spirit, place your hope in it and trust in it, now and always. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.

AMEN.