

Did you hear our Presiding Bishop's sermon yesterday at the Royal Wedding? Oh, I was hoping that ALL of you had. Then I could say, "Ditto" and sit down.

Seriously, though, you could hear the beginning of Bishop Curry's Pentecost sermon yesterday. He told how "Fire had changed the world," and declared that "love can change the world, also." And Prince Harry is a great example of being changed by love. He turned a corner in his life yesterday, went from being where he was to where God wanted him to be.

All Bishop Curry needed to turn his sermon into a Pentecost sermon is to tell where love comes from, where the impulse and inspiration to share God's love comes from. I'll tell you now (but you already know), the source of love is God. But you may not yet fully know that the way we know of God's love, the way we see God's love, the impulses we get to share God's love is all the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is a timely message because today is THE DAY we tell the Holy Spirit story, the VERY DAY that that God gave us Jesus' Spirit, so that we can turn the corner in our lives and carry out God's work in our world.



Jesus had told his disciples this day was coming. Just before he ascended into heaven he said his

departure would be to our advantage, "because if I don't go away, the [Holy Spirit] won't come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."¹

Jesus had told his disciples that he had asked the Father to send them the Holy Spirit. "Forever," he said.² Jesus also taught them the Holy Spirit would, "teach us all things and remind [us] of everything [he had taught his disciples]."³

The Holy Spirit has another function, to "convict the whole world about sin and righteousness and judgment."⁴ Given the news we have heard lately, we wonder why the

Spirit isn't doing its job in this regard. And then we remember that the Spirit doesn't accomplish anything alone. Instead, the Holy Spirit works in and through US to work on those sharp corners in our world.

According to Acts chapter 1, just as Jesus was ready to turn HIS corner and return from whence he came, his disciples asked, "Is THIS when you restore the Kingdom of Israel?"

Do you remember Jesus' response? He said, "That's not for you to know." In other words, "That's none of your business. You're turning the wrong corner. Yes, I'll return and restore GOD's Kingdom one day, restore creation, and wipe every tear from every eye. But first," Jesus said, "You will receive power. And after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, America, Virginia, Alexandria, the Beauregard Corridor, and EVEN at Virginia Theological Seminary, where there currently is NO local outreach ministry." (OK, so I may have paraphrased Jesus' words just a bit at the end there.)

Today, the Day of Pentecost, is when God fulfilled this promise, the day God fulfills anew this promise. I'll give you my Spirit, Christ's Spirit, to help you make the world more just, more like I created things to be.

Did you notice what Jesus' disciples were doing on that first Pentecost? They were "all together in one place," scripture says. All 120 of them. They undoubtedly were praying, worshiping God. And then the Holy Spirit arrived—loudly, visibly, miraculously—drawing even strangers in to wonder what was going on.

There are two aspects of this story, two reported facts, that caught my attention today. First, the Spirit of Christ that came upon them unified them, molded very different people (people with different languages) into one body, despite their differences, made them into the Body of Christ. This God-energy made them one, unifying them by giving them the same purpose. And they began speaking about "God's deeds of power."

We know God's deeds of power:

- God's Spirit created all that is.
- God's Spirit helped Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and even hard-hearted old Pharaoh turn major corners in their lives.
- God's Spirit guided former slaves through the wilderness, forging them into a people with an identity and purpose.
- God's Spirit gave voice to prophecy, taught us about justice, and nurtured us into understanding the whole world belongs to God, not just our own family, our gender, our race, our sexual orientation, our political party, our socio-economic class, and our country. Spirit-truth is this: There ARE no corners in God's world.
- God's Spirit inspired some fishermen, tax collectors, and other marginated people into becoming the hands, voice, and heart of Christ and changing the world in Christ's name.
- God's Spirit raised Jesus of Nazareth from death, revealing him to be the Christ and giving us the promise of eternal life.
- God's Spirit even lifted our own depression, our own sense of decline, and impending death, our own fears, into acting as Christ in OUR world.

I know that not everyone here may have FELT the Holy Spirit acting in their life. We are, after all, Episcopalians! You know, of "high decorum." We think our way to God. And, when we rationally reflect on our God-life, we realize that God is somehow at work, both deep within each of us and collectively among us. We recognize that God's Spirit is moving us together, making us one, motivating us to act as one in Christ's name. Either way, by feeling or rational thought, the Holy Spirit IS at work here at Church of the Resurrection.

By the way, I said there were two facts in the Pentecost story that caught my attention today. I've only talked about one, about how the Holy Spirit unifies us to do Christ's work in our world. The other fact I noticed is that Jesus' disciples had gathered for Pentecost, for worship at 9 am. How prophetic for Resurrection, we who plan to worship at 8 and 9 am instead of 8 and 10 am, beginning in November when we move our Sunday worship to the seminary (you know, that chapel around the corner on Seminary Road, a mere 1.77 miles from here—that chapel with the world-class organ!)

God is speaking to us today, saying:

- Empowered by my Spirit, bring justice to Alexandria's West End and let my Spirit keep you together as one.
- Just as God's Spirit sustained his people in the wilderness, so too will God's Spirit sustain US as we "turn the corner" to do Christ's work in OUR world.

¹ John 16:7

² John 14:16

³ John 14:26

⁴ John 16:8