

Pentecost

Happy Birthday!

Frankton - 6/8/14

Scripture: Acts 2:1-13 The coming of the Holy Spirit

Proposition: Our church's two pronged approach: maintenance and mission.

The apostles are in Jerusalem. They are there because that is where Jesus told them to go. For forty days after Jesus' resurrection he has been with them. Not all the time, just some of the time. He has appeared to them in a locked upper room, both with and without Thomas. He has appeared to them on the shores of the lake as he prepared breakfast for them. During one of his other appearances, he told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. And finally forty days after his resurrection, in Acts 1:8, he told them that they will be his witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and all the world. Then, as the apostles stood watching on the Mount of Olives, they saw Jesus ascend into heaven.

They went back into the city and prayed together for ten days. During that ten days they decided that they needed to replace Judas. Why would they feel the need to have another apostle? After all, Jesus is dead, no more following him around. You'd think there wouldn't be a need for another apostle. Peter steps up to the plate and says that they need to replace Judas to perform his share of the ministry. Jesus may be gone, but the ministry wasn't. They nominate two men – Justus and Matthias. Matthias was chosen by lot and Justus was left out. It's interesting to note that Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, takes time to mention Matthias' selection because neither the new disciple Matthias nor the losing Justus are ever mentioned again.

[SLIDE] Ten days after Jesus' ascension, the apostles are at the 50th day after the Feast of Passover, Pentecost, which is a Jewish holiday. This was one of the three main Feasts in the Jewish year. On this day the Jewish people celebrated the first fruits of the harvest. All males living within 15 miles of Jerusalem were required to attend. Plus this feast drew Jews from all over the known world. This was a major feast. Jerusalem's population swelled during this feast like Daytona Beach during Spring Break. Isn't it interesting that on one of the major Jewish holidays of the year, God called his Christian church into being; because that's what Pentecost means to Christians. We celebrate Pentecost as the birthday of the church. For on this day, when all the believers were gathered together with the apostles, the Holy Spirit came upon them. Acts 2 says:

[SLIDE] *Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm...* [2]

How many of you have heard a mighty wind. Some of you may remember a mighty wind in the form of a tornado. I can't remember a tornado like some of you, but I can remember when I was a child and we were having a picnic out at Killbuck Park in Anderson. Some of us kids were walking the little train tracks that wander through the park. We were in an area where the tracks ran through a little woods, so there were trees on both sides of us and arched over us forming a tree-tunnel. We were out exploring. The wind had been calm but suddenly this big wind came rushing through the tree-tunnel and I can still hear it roar as it hit. It wasn't a tornado or anything like that, it was just a strong wind coming through, probably the leading edge of a weather front. I was a little concerned – ok I was petrified. When I read this passage I think of my experience on

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the train tracks in the woods much like some of you may remember a tornado that was really too close for comfort. That's akin to what the disciples heard that day.

But the disciples weren't the only ones who heard the noise of the wind. Others around the disciples heard it as well. Let's look at this from their angle. Have you ever been sitting in your house and heard an extremely loud noise coming from outside and you didn't know what it was? I was sitting at the Aroma church one day and had that happen to me. I heard a very loud boom and went outside to investigate. I couldn't find anything wrong but later found out that a house had exploded in Elwood. Anyway, I think that is kind of what happened to folks in Jerusalem that day. The disciples are at the house that they are staying at and this noise comes and it's a loud enough noise that a lot of people milling around in this section of the city Jerusalem hear it. So they come to see what was happening – kind of like people following a siren and flashing lights.

Remember, there are people in Jerusalem that are on their pilgrimage because of Pentecost Feast. The list in Acts tells us that there are people from three different continents – Europe, Asia and Africa. You have people of all different nationalities that speak all different kinds of languages as well as native Jerusalemites. And when they gather around the disciples, they hear the disciples speaking in their own native language. The native Jerusalemites and all the visitors in Jerusalem were amazed – perplexed maybe a better word - confounded may be even a better word. They can't understand how these Galileans, a nationality not known for its innate intelligence or its language skills, are speaking in a way that so many of the foreigners can understand them.

But Verse 13 says that not all the onlookers were amazed. **[SLIDE]** *But others in the crowd ridiculed them saying, "They're just drunk, that's all."* [13] I'm guessing those were the native Jerusalemites. After all, they probably didn't know these other languages that the apostles were speaking. It would be like us leaving here today and going in to Elwood and having the Holy Spirit give us different languages to speak. One of us might be speaking Swahili, another Swedish. One speaking Mongolian, and another speaking Slavic. One speaking Syriac and another speaking Korean. All at once. The cacophony of sound that we would make might be deafening. And the people of Elwood might just think that we were drunk or high or stoned since they didn't understand us. You know how us Americans are – if you're in America you better speak English because we don't know any other languages.

Here Peter steps up to the plate. He is probably speaking the native language of Jerusalem at this point – Aramaic. He tells the nay-sayers of the crowd that the apostles aren't drunk – after all it's only 9:00 AM. I know that today, the fact that it's early in the morning may not mean much – they could still be drunk. But back then, people weren't drunk at 9:00 AM, there was just too much work that had to get done in order to survive. Peter adds that they shouldn't be surprised at what they hear because the Prophet Joel predicted this would happen and he goes on to quote Joel to them. Joel prophesied that the Spirit would come down among men and women, old and young. And three thousand people understood and became the church's first converts by giving their life to Christ.

You see, at this point I need to talk with you about the two major elements in your Christian life. **[SLIDE]** The first element is to give your life to Christ. It's the point in time when you understand that maybe humans are not quite the hot stuff we think we are. It's the point where we as individuals finally get it. We get that it's not up to us. It's not about how good a person we are.

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It's not about how many good things we do in life. It's the point where we understand that Christ is the only one who can save us no matter how good we are. It's the point we understand that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from the grave so that we could have eternal life. It's a point in our lives that really is just a point in our lives, a moment. And in that moment we decide to give our life to Christ. It's the point those 3000 converts had that I told you about.

And then there is that second element. [SLIDE] The second element is to live your life for Christ. It comes after that first element when we give our life to Christ. This element is not a point, it's a span of time; it's a process. It's a process where we learn how to live the life that Christ would want us to live. It's the day to day living as Christ would have us live. It's the week to week growing to become a little more like Christ. It's taking the example of Christ's life and putting that example into motion in our life. It's this two element process that the church was born for. The Holy Spirit birthed the church so that we could learn how to give our life to Christ and how to live our life for Christ after we've given our life to Christ.

Pentecost is the day the church was born; it's the church's birthday. It's the day that it took in its first converts. It's the day that its mission to the world began. And what is its mission to the world? I'm glad you asked that. In our United Methodist Discipline (that's our rulebook) it tells us what the mission of the church is. [SLIDE] It states, "The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." That's pretty simple. It's not a page long letter on what our mission is. It doesn't have a lot of big words that we don't understand. It doesn't sound like it was written by a lawyer. This church says it differently: [SLIDE] *Building God's Community*. Just plain and simple; the mission of the church is to make disciples for Jesus Christ; to help people give their life to Christ and then live their life for Christ.

Later in our *Book of Discipline*, it tells us how our local church should be set up in order to fulfill our mission. It says basically that the church has a structure consisting of two major prongs. [SLIDE] We have one part that concentrates on maintenance. That doesn't mean just making sure the light bulbs are working. It means that part is nurturing the people that are already in our church. That's the part of our church that keeps us not only coming back every week, but performs all the tasks that we must do to be a church. We have teams that have work to do. We have Sunday school that educates our members and friends. We have Bible Study for people to learn about Christianity. And we have a regular worship service that is supposed to help fill our gas tanks so that we can get through the week ahead of us. The maintenance prong of our structure is that part that nurtures our community of faith; helping us live our life for Christ after we have given our life to Christ.

The other prong of our structure is that of mission – [SLIDE] and it really has two parts. One part of mission is called [SLIDE] witness. That's where we go out into the world and concentrate on people and their needs with the expressed hope that they will come to know the joy of believing in Jesus Christ – to give their life to Christ – and come to our church to share that joy. It's the building of relationships with people so that when, not if, but when we tell folks about our relationship with Jesus Christ, they'll be more inclined to sit up and take notice. It's what we are called to do in the mission of the church – to help people give their life to Christ and then live their life for Christ.

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[SLIDE] The other part of mission is what people normally think about when they hear the word 'mission'. We call it outreach. It is going out and helping others to know the joy of Christ with little to no thought of them coming to our church. That's money we send to missions and missionaries both abroad and here in the states. It's collecting school supplies, vitamins and medicine for folks who live half-way around the world in Africa. It's going on a mission trip to Appalachia to do whatever it is we are going to do for those folks when we head down to Red Bird as we have done for the last several years. It's putting on a tenderloin dinner and giving the proceeds to the local schools or the library's summer reading program or the food pantry. All these things that we do, we do with no thought that any of the recipients will come to our church.

Christ told us to do these things when, in Matthew 5, he told us that he had come to fulfill the Old Testament law of Moses which in part says that [SLIDE] we are to take care of the aliens, orphans, and widows. [SLIDE] He showed us that we should do these things when, in Matthew 9, he ate with the tax collector and sinners. [SLIDE] He told us to do these things when, in Matthew 25, he told those who had given a cup of water and some food to the weakest and visited the sick and prisoners would be rewarded in paradise while those who didn't do them would be judged accordingly.

So we'll do these things. And we'll do them over and over until we may get tired of doing them. Then, we'll do them some more because by then we'll not be doing them because Jesus told us to do them. We'll not be doing them because that's what church folks do. We'll be doing them because we do love other folks like Christ said in Matthew 22 when he told us that the greatest commandment was [SLIDE] to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We'll do them because we love.

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CHILDREN'S CHAT

Hold up a sign that says, "Gott liebt Sie." Ask the children if they know what it means. Let them know that you are not surprised by their confusion, because the sign is in German. Then show them a sign with the words, "Dieu vous aime." Again, ask if they can read it. Point out that this sign is in French. Then hold up a sign with "El dios le ama." Ask if anyone knows its meaning. Let them know that this sign is in Spanish, and stress that it is very difficult to understand a sign written in a foreign language. Finally, hold up a sign that says, "God loves you." Have the children raise their hands if they can read it. Point out that it is so nice to receive a message we can understand, in a language that is familiar to us. Let them know that this is exactly what happened on the Day of Pentecost, when the followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit and suddenly able to talk about God's powerful works in all the languages of the world (Acts 2:1-13). Ask the children if they think that the foreigners in Jerusalem were happy to hear the disciples speaking in languages they could understand. Stress that it is important that we all be able to hear about God's love in a language that we understand, and then let them know that all the signs you are holding contain the very same message, "God loves you."

MEMORIZING NOTES

Jesus sightings: wwo Thomas, beach, stay, 1.8
Matthias: to do his share of the ministry

Pentecost holiday, population, birthday, []
You?, tornado, killbuck park
Others heard, house explode, people came
Foreigners, all hear, Galileans
[] us to Elwood, different languages
Peter, can't in their economy, 3000,

2, give life to Christ, a point, 3000
Live life for Christ, process, more like Christ, church born for both
Birthday, converts, mission, make disciples, BGC, give live

How, two prongs, maintenance nurture
Mission, two parts, witness, want them to give life
Outreach, show God's love no expectations, ex
MT 5, aliens, MT 9, ate with, MT 25 sheep goats
We'll do again and again, till we love, LGLN

SERMON NOTES INSERT

Sermon Notes, 6/08/14

Happy Birthday Acts 2.1-13

Discuss the mood of the apostles before Pentecost.

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What did the Holy Spirit do at Pentecost?

What do the Holy Spirit's actions allow the disciples to do?

Can you remember when you gave your life to Christ?

What can you do better at living your life for Christ?

How can you help with the maintenance (*nurture*) aspect of church life?

Discuss the difference between *outreach* and *mission*.

Name one action you can do this week that you can take from this sermon?

NOT USED

Now right after this statement, the Discipline goes on to state that, [SLIDE] “The local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple making occurs.” (p. 87) Our rulebook goes on to tell us that the global part of the United Methodist Church isn't the most significant part in making disciples. It says that all the general boards and agencies, and all the mission work of the international church, isn't the most significant part in making disciples. It says that all the conferences that we have, like our General Conference that just last week concluded and our Annual Conference that we are going to have in a couple of weeks, are not the most significant arenas to fulfill the church's mission. Our rule book says that the local church is the most significant place to make disciples for Jesus Christ. That's this place right here. That's you folks right here.