

King of Glory Lutheran Church

May 22/23, 2021

Year B: Pentecost: Acts 2:1-21 & Romans 8:22-27

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Acts 2:1-21

*2*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. *2*And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. *3*Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. *4*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

*5*Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. *6*And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. *7*Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” *8*And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? *9*Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, *10*Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, *11*Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” *12*All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” *13*But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

*14*But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. *15*Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. *16*No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: *17*‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. *18*Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. *19*And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. *20*The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. *21*Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

Romans 8:22-27

*22*We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; *23*and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our

bodies. ²⁴*For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?* ²⁵*But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* ²⁶*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.* ²⁷*And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

I am married to a camp director. I tell you that because for many years I have lived with the joys and sorrows of outdoor ministry on a personal level. Even though I am not on staff of a camp, outdoor ministry is woven into my own life and ministry because it is my partner's life work.

May is the time when Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp comes to life. And this year that is true more than ever before. Following over a year of COVID and the Cameron Peak Fire which burned through camp last fall there is a lot to do to get camp ready for the summer season of campers.

Summer staff have already started arriving at camp and staff training will officially kick off this Wednesday. The summer camp staff is made up of unique individuals that have a wide range of gifts and talents. And volunteers have been working hard for many weeks now to prepare the buildings and property for campers.

With the massive spring cleaning happening at camp and all of the volunteers and staff coming to camp I get to see Sky Ranch as one beautiful expression of the church and the work of the Holy Spirit. Every year I am amazed as I watch a sleepy camp with dusty buildings and untidy trails wake up and come to life and welcome people. And every year I think that it must be the work of the Holy Spirit that brings people together to create a beautiful community and wilderness place for so many campers.

From the very beginning of the church, the church has been rich in surprises and diversity and gifts as we are reminded every year on Pentecost. Pentecost is the day we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church.

After Jesus' ascension to heaven, the disciples were hanging out together, praying for the Holy Spirit to come as Jesus promised. And on this day, the fiftieth day after Passover, which the Jews called Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and filled all the apostles.

According to Jewish tradition Pentecost was a celebration of the first fruits of the harvest and a celebration of the gift of God's law and covenant. Jews from all over the world gathered together in Jerusalem for the festival.

But on this Pentecost the Holy Spirit did something that no one expected. By the power of the Holy Spirit the story of God's power and God's works were communicated in every language so that everyone could understand. God reached out to the people in the language they knew. And suddenly those people began to see and know and understand God in a way that they hadn't before. The Holy Spirit spoke to them in a new way and changed their lives.

This is the power of our creative and living God. Our God who speaks through a variety of traditions and languages and people. Our God who's power and love is expressed in infinite surprising and familiar ways.

As we celebrate this Pentecost we mark the birthday of the church and rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit there in that place filling up the disciples and moving them to share with others God's wonderful act of saving love through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit that has moved through the church from generation to generation. The Holy Spirit that is at work through us today.

We don't always pay a lot of attention to the Holy Spirit. Probably because the Holy Spirit is a mystery to us. Difficult to capture or define. Both gentle and wild. You might even think that you have never actually experienced the Holy Spirit. Never seen a tongue of fire on your own head. And yet today we remember that Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be given to each one of us and live in us.

In our reading today from Paul's letter to the church in Rome he writes that the Holy Spirit prays for us when we do not have words. The Holy Spirit lives and breathes in us, so that we are never alone, never separated from God.

As a church and as individuals we pray for the Holy Spirit to come to us. We say that we believe in the Holy Spirit in the creeds we speak. We are good at those things. But what about noticing and sharing our experiences of the Holy Spirit? That, we don't always do.

The Holy Spirit does not always appear as a flame, or a violent wind as it does in Acts 2. Sometimes it is a gentle nudge or a helpful presence like in Romans 8.

When I struggle to hear God's voice or feel God's presence I move. Maybe that sounds funny. But I find that the Holy Spirit often pushes me to change my

perspective. I might do this in a very simple way by changing where I am sitting or which direction I'm facing. I might lay down on the floor or go for a walk. I turn off a screen or turn off anything making noise. I find that simply shifting the way I'm looking at something or listening to someone can open me up to a new thought or feeling.

That's the Holy Spirit, nudging me to move or change or look at something a new way.

I shared with you the wonder of camp opening up this year because that is a place where I see the Holy Spirit at work. When I look around camp or at the program schedule for the summer I am always overwhelmed and can't believe that everything that needs to happen will happen. And yet, when people come together the Holy Spirit blows through with energy and wisdom and love that makes the impossible possible.

That's the Holy Spirit, helping us to work together to create space for worship and learning and laughter and love at camp.

And in our church, when we face challenges or opportunities it is natural to wonder: How we will make it through this? What direction should our ministry take? What do we do when we disagree or grow weary or lose hope? But we continue to share our joys and sorrows. We care for each other during a pandemic. We share what we have with those who are hungry, or need diapers, or school supplies, or quilts or pillows. We pray together and open God's Word together and move forward together.

That's the Holy Spirit giving us wisdom, strength and purpose as the church.

On this Pentecost Sunday we give thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit that breathed life into the church. Today let us pray for the Holy Spirit to come to us. And then let's expect to see it and feel it and know it. Because the Holy Spirit lives in you and me and the whole church. The Holy Spirit will comfort us when we need comfort and inspire us when we need inspiration.

Watch and listen for the Holy Spirit to nudge you or move you or change you or inspire you. I know you will be surprised and amazed at the power of the Holy Spirit just like those first disciples were. And like them our lives will never be the same. Amen.