

## TO EVERY RACE AND NATION

*Day of Pentecost – B*

May 20, 2018

Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b;  
Romans 8:22-27, John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

All Saints' and Emmanuel have had a tradition of celebrating Pentecost together; but this year's observance is a bit bittersweet with Father Tom's retirement at the end of April, and (office administrator) Judy's retirement at the end of this month. We are honoring her today because she has been important to the life of both of our congregations; so, our joint worship and joint celebration of Judy go hand in hand.

This Day of Pentecost is the third major festival of the church year; but one that gets little notice except from people who are mostly aligned with liturgical churches. This fiftieth day of Easter celebrates the Spirit, through whom and in whom the people of God are created and re-created. Sometimes called the birthday of the church, some have suggested this should really be called the baptism of the church since, for Christians, the gift of the Spirit is what happens to us in our baptism.

The Collect (or Prayer of the Day) reminded us and asked of God: "on this day you opened the way of eternal life *to every race and nation* by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad [that is, cover the earth with] this gift...by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth...."

In our readings for today, you heard how the disciples gathered were suddenly filled with the Spirit, speaking about God's power and might in the languages of all the different people in Jerusalem who formed that melting pot of culture. Each heard in his or her native tongue, as a sign that *this God* is not only the God of the Hebrew people, but *God for people everywhere*.

The Spirit is enabling the rebirth and renewal—helping us see all of creation as God's own—and worthy of our praise, respect, and compassion. The Psalmist proclaims: "You send forth your Spirit...and so you renew the face of the earth.

In Romans, the Apostle Paul reminds us that this creative work is very personal: The Spirit that is "making all things new" is interceding *for each one of us* "with sighs too deep for words." What we aren't quite able to accomplish on our own is precisely that which the Spirit is helping us to "get it together."

Jesus ties it all together when he speaks of "the Advocate" this is to come, that Spirit that will pick up where things leave off once Jesus has gone to the Father. All those things that seemed too "out there" or "conceptual," when Jesus spoke of them, will begin to make sense.

It all boils down to this: God is love. Yesterday, Bishop Michael Curry reminded a couple at their wedding: "We were made by a power of love. And our lives were meant and are meant to be lived in that love...the source of love is God himself.

"There's an old medieval poem that says: 'Where true love is found, God himself is there.'

And, because God is love, and love is not selfish or self-centered, when the world governs itself by love, Curry told them: "...then no child will go to bed hungry in this world...we will let justice roll down like a mighty stream and righteousness like an ever-flowing brook...poverty will become history...the earth will be a sanctuary...we will lay down our swords and shields down by the river side to study war no more.

“When love is the way [and] we know that God is the source of us all we actually treat each other...like we are actually family...a new heaven and a new earth.” \*

Pentecost is the day we celebrate that *that fire of love* has been kindled in each one of us. It is what binds All Saints’ and Emmanuel churches as “one”—just as Jesus prayed. And it is our way of doing together in this place what we proclaim (and God intends) that we do beyond these doors, beyond comfort of being “full communion partners.” The Gazebo outside is round and faces in every direction—which is perhaps a great metaphor for what our Lord has called us together to do: Look outward; for that is where our work lies. That’s where God is sending us. That’s where the fire of Pentecost will spread in flames that touch people everywhere with God’s good news, God’s acceptance, God’s mercy, and God’s love. Amen.

\* Excerpted from The Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Bruce Curry: Homily at the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle (Duke and Duchess of Sussex).