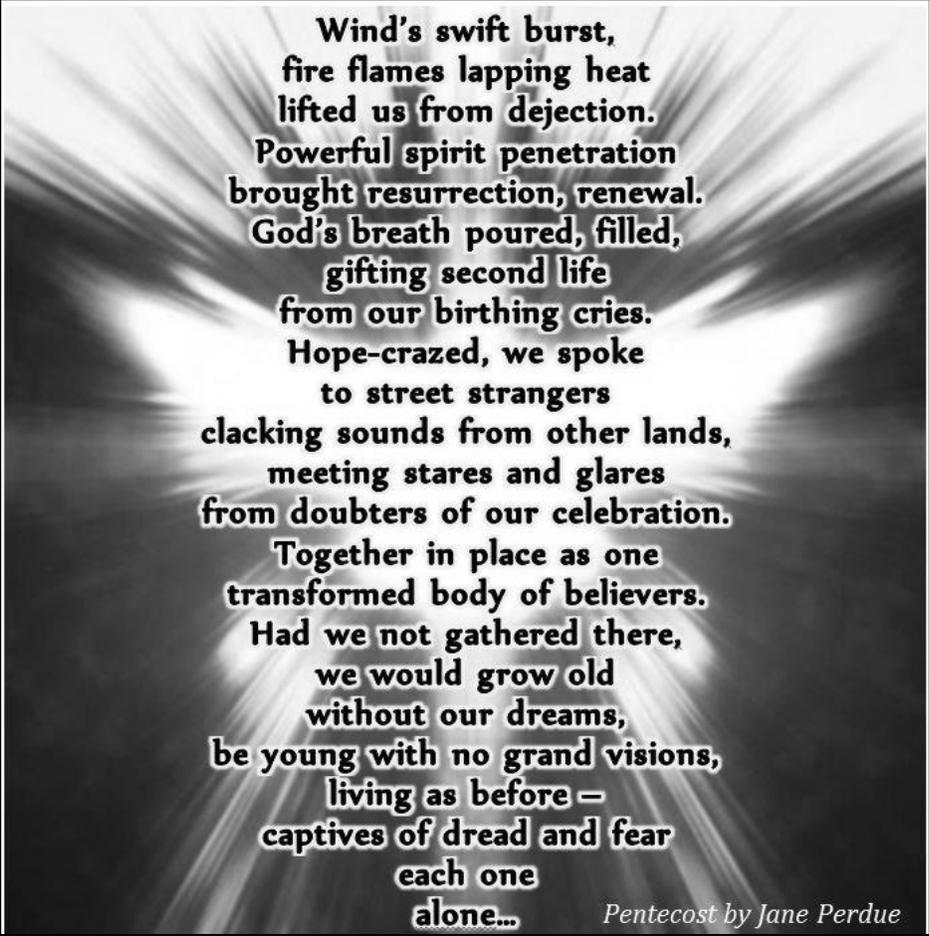


THE SPIRIT IS HERE!



Wind's swift burst,
fire flames lapping heat
lifted us from dejection.
Powerful spirit penetration
brought resurrection, renewal.
God's breath poured, filled,
gifting second life
from our birthing cries.
Hope-crazed, we spoke
to street strangers
clacking sounds from other lands,
meeting stares and glares
from doubters of our celebration.
Together in place as one
transformed body of believers.
Had we not gathered there,
we would grow old
without our dreams,
be young with no grand visions,
living as before –
captives of dread and fear
each one
alone...

Pentecost by Jane Perdue

Scripture:

Acts 2:1-21

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

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

¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, 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. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Romans 8:22-27

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³and 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. ²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶Likewise 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. ²⁷And 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.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



THE SPIRIT IS HERE

Well, the Spirit is here! Do you feel it? Look at your neighbors' faces. I dare you to not smile at one another. The spirit is in your heartbeat, and in your soul.

My friend Jane Purdue, who is the wife of Pastor Reverend Roland Perdue, wrote the poem we put on the cover of the bulletin. She is one of those "Spirited" people, someone who looks at the world with the eyes and heart and mind of a poet. Even though her life has not been easy, she has a positive uplifting spirit that is contagious when you are with her. She usually writes her poems about Biblical events from the perspective of one of the participants in the story as she did in this one.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The seven candles we lit today represent the gifts of the Spirit according to Isaiah 11: wisdom, reverence, wonder, understanding, strength, courage, and joy, all the things it takes to be resilient in this world.

Isn't it interesting that love and faith were not listed? I guess love can be part of the wonder or joy, and faith is in reverence and courage and wisdom and strength and understanding.

Ponder these seven for a moment. (Look at the bulletin to see the list.) Which one might you

choose as a gift over the others if you could only have one gift of the Spirit. Ponder for a few moments and think about which is most important to you or which one do you think you naturally possess?

FESTIVAL OF HOMILETICS

Last week I spoke about attending the Festival of Homiletics in Denver. Our first two keynote speakers were women speaking to about fourteen hundred pastors. The first was Nadia Bolz-Weber who used to be a standup comedian until she felt the spirit calling her to be a preacher. So she went to seminary and started an urban Baptist church in downtown Denver.

The other was Sara Miles who has an interesting background as well. Sara was a restaurant chef, secular intellectual, skeptic, and journalist and previously a professed atheist before she felt called to become the Director of Ministry at the St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco. Her story is incredible and she preached in Denver with a very down to earth tone of a journalist who could paint a picture in your mind as she spoke.

Talk about the spirit moving! Many of Sara's social circle and work colleagues rejected the church institution for many reasons. Yet one Sunday morning as she went for a morning walk, she felt a strong tug to walk into a church and partake in communion.

Sara Miles tells the whole story in her book, *Take this Bread: A Radical Conversion*. Her

ministry is all about hunger, feeding the hungry and ministering to the people on the street.

It all began when the spirit moved Sara to enter the doors of St. Gregory of Nyssa. When she ate the bread and took a sip of the wine she found herself radically transformed. At the age of forty-six, it was her first communion and it changed everything!

Although most of her friends were in shock when she told them she felt called to do church ministry, she explained her conversion. She said that when she looked closely at who Jesus really was and not just the institution of the church, she couldn't resist Jesus.

Miles said, "The Christianity that called to me, through the stories I read in the Bible, scattered the proud and rebuked the powerful. It was a religion in which divinity was revealed by scars on flesh. It was an upside-down world in which treasure, as the prophet said, was found in darkness; the hungry were filled with good things and the rich sent out empty; where new life was revealed through a humiliated woman and a tortured man."

Sara's story fits well on Pentecost Sunday because it is a day when we focus on the ways God's Spiritual presence encountered humans and unexpected things happened to them.

PENTECOST – THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

I enjoy reading an online sermon blog, called Day One. In it last week, Pastor Scott Kenfake described the history of Pentecost. Pentecost is thought of as the birthday of the Christian church, but it was an important Jewish festival before it became a Christian festival. The Jewish festival included a pilgrimage to Jerusalem fifty days after Passover. Once in Jerusalem they celebrated and commemorated Israel's liberation from Egypt. It was a celebration of the formation of a new kind of community living radically differently after being freed from Egypt. The early Christians incorporated this sense of the

formation of a new community in their understanding of Pentecost, too.

"SPIRIT-LED" PEOPLE

Marcus Borg described Pentecost as "The central affirmation that the Spirit promised by Jesus is now present among his followers and in the world. The Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ." (One in the same.) This is foundational to an understanding of Christianity today.

As Christians we are "Spirit-led" people who have a sense that the Spirit dwells with us always to advocate, comfort, console, guide us and pray for us when we have no words. (As it said in Romans 8, "For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.")

But even though Sara Miles believed in prayer after her conversion to Christianity, she said it wasn't some magical experience where her life was eternally happy from that point on. She said that as I kept going to church, the questions raised by the experience only multiplied. Conversion was turning out to be quite different from the greeting-card moments promised by televangelists.

She said that those moments as televangelists describe them are that Jesus steps into your life, personally saves you and becomes your lucky charm forever.

Instead, she added, becoming a Christian lesbian was socially and politically awkward, as well as profoundly confusing. I wasn't struck with any sudden conviction that I now understood the "truth." Yet she stayed on the journey of faith as it gradually unfolded, became a Director of Ministry, and wrote five books.

SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

That first Pentecost was the beginning of a new kind of community that was equipped by the Spirit of God to spread the Good News of God's unconditional love. The once frightened and discouraged group of Christ followers became confident and unified advocates for proclaiming the risen Christ. A new faith movement was born, and God's Spirit, fire, breath, and wind strengthened them for the hard days ahead.

And God is still speaking to us today. Not in fire and wind, but in people like Sara Miles, who was previously an enthusiastic atheist who met Jesus as a living reality in bread and wine.

As a result of the Spirit moving in Sara she started a food pantry and now she set up a network that provides hundreds of families free food every week.

Miles' latest book titled, *Jesus Freak*, is a love song to the ministry of the laity. She tells of her own lay ministry, out in the world, meeting people's needs, meeting them where they are on the street or in shelters. She cooks for the poor and the un-churched, she goes to the apartment of a dying woman and spends time, profound time, with her and her new family. She forgives and reconciles and shows them that God loves everybody, no matter how smelly or obnoxious. As a result, she forms a new community of friends while she feeds the hungry and ministers to the needy. (All without seminary!)

The living Spirit of Christ, the wind, fire, and breath of the Spirit, transformed Sara miles and her community. When the spirit is active and present it creates a new kind of inclusive, welcoming community based on love.

The same Spirit is here. This community of Church of the Roses is just such a community that is blooming once again.

THE SPIRIT BRINGS CHANGE

Pastor Kenefake says the Spirit always brings change, some of it welcome and some not. But the change always brings more focus on the neighbor in need. It's about embracing the pain and suffering in the world and helping to transform it into new life. Look at your neighbor again. They may not look like they are in need. But we all are in need in some way.

I challenge you to choose one of the seven gifts of the Spirit each week for seven weeks and intentionally develop them week by week. If you choose, for example, "wonder" for this week, then look at God's creation with wonder, your family with wonder, your life history with wonder. Maybe you will wonder how you are still alive. But I think your wonder about these things might lead to thanksgiving and gratitude as well.

Take the gift of courage, and have more courage to go beyond your comfort zone and do something new. Make a new friend, help with our Spring Fling, start to exercise more. Talk to a new neighbor. Use the Spirit's gift of courage to help others. Be brave!

WHEN HAS THE SPIRIT TOUCHED YOU?

Think for a moment of times when you know the Spirit touched you, reassured you, inspired you - to have courage, wisdom, strength, understanding, reverence, joy, or wonder. Share that moment with others; share the good news to help others feel the Spirit through you.

May the Spirit that is in you reassure you of the deep, deep love God has for you. The Spirit knows our inner most thoughts and worries and can transform them into more energy to change the world. The Spirit helps us in our weakness and knows our minds and intercedes for us and still is alive, bringing renewal and hope. Trust that the Spirit is here in you!

Let us pray: Loving Spirit, make us aware and receptive to the unpredictable gift of your creative spirit that is closer to us than breath itself while it permeates and sustains the universe. Amen

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more. Amen



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