

**And it Filled the Entire House**  
**A Sermon by Eric Dillenbeck**  
**Fairmount Presbyterian Church**  
**Cleveland Heights, Ohio**  
**31 May 2009**  
**Text: Acts 2:1-21**

**NRSV ACTS 2:1-21**

<sup>2</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs--in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

<sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

<sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.

<sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup>And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. <sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. <sup>21</sup>Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

*The Word of the Lord*    **Thanks be to God**

## ***“And it Filled the Entire House”***

To me, there is nothing funnier than a good “Before and After shot.” Do you know what I am talking about, the photos that are used on all of these Make-over shows you see on TV.

The “Before” shot is always AWFUL. It is the frumpiest picture of someone with no smile, and the sourest expression on the face. No makeup, bad lighting, and the worst clothes you could ever imagine. It is designed to make the person look just awful and it always succeeds. The person always looks like life has run them over. The “After” shot shows the same person, smiling, happy, with great lighting, makeup, great clothes. The difference is always HUGE. The person just looks happier and full of life.

The story of Pentecost is our “Before” and “After” picture of the early church.

The Before Shot:

The members of the early church are a bit confused and perplexed about what comes next. The disciples had just left the place of Jesus ascension and returned to their private room in Jerusalem. The believers had cast lots and chosen Matthias to replace Judas as the 12th apostle and they were gathered with the other believers in one place to celebrate Pentecost. Jerusalem was packed with Jews from every nation. The city was literally teeming with pilgrims who had come to celebrate Pentecost. In Jewish culture, Pentecost is a festival of thanksgiving for the first fruits of the spring harvest. It always takes place 50 days after Passover and by the time of the writing of the New Testament it was also associated with the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

So on Pentecost, the Disciples and other believers are together in a room, safely tucked away, praying, trying to figure out what to do next; trying to discern together how they are called to engage the world, how they are called to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ to all the world, when right outside their doors the world is gathered.

**AND THEN SHE COMES!**

Holy Spirit does not tiptoe into the room, waiting for someone to notice, she does not serenely guide the group to a decision.

Instead, Holy Spirit rushes into the room, filling the whole house like the rush of a mighty wind, touching everyone with tongues of fire; FILLING everyone with power and speech.

And before they know it the believers have forgotten their careful planning and are bursting at the seams to share the Good News! They are so loud in fact they draw a crowd, they make a scene and in them the Holy Spirit pushes the news of Jesus out of their particular culture and shares it with the whole world.

Because of them, we are here now Celebrating Pentecost.

That is the After Shot.

The believers in today's story had no idea what was in store for them. They were not expecting the Holy Spirit to fill them so dramatically, they were gathered for a nice quiet celebration of Pentecost when "SUDDENLY from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting". You can imagine that this sound was not comforting.

I can tell you from experience that the sound of a violent wind does not make you want to shout for joy. When I was in high school hurricane Hugo barreled down upon Charleston. Instead of fleeing the state, my family took refuge inside the thick walls of the Dock Street Theater in downtown Charleston. As the wind ripped through the city, roofs were torn off and windows shattered and the sound of those violent winds howled through the halls of the theater. Thankfully we were safe and sound, but I can tell you the sound of violent winds do not instill comfort in my bones.

I looked at a lot of art depicting our passage this week. The paintings that held the most truth for me did not show people filled with great joy and excitement at this incredible experience. Rather, much like we would respond to the sound of a violent wind filling this entire room, they showed people who are confused and perplexed, even scared.

The paintings that held most truth for me reminded me that the in-breaking Spirit can be unsettling!

But we do not necessarily enjoy or appreciate being unsettled. In fact, most of us do all we can to keep that from happening.

In the movie *Chocolat* the director alludes to the power of the Spirit through the use of wind. The movie is set in a French town which is ruled over by the Conte de Reynaud, who is the town mayor and assumed moral authority.

Just as Jesus says, the Spirit blows where it will and in this movie the Spirit blows open the church doors, but the Conte very quickly bolts the doors against the wind. For all his devotion, he cannot accept the work of the Holy Spirit, because he craves order and tranquility above all. It is the Spirit who blows Vianne and Anouk into town, and it is Vianne, with the help of the Spirit, who is able to breathe new life and freedom into this strict community-even into the Conte!

When we encounter the Holy Spirit, we can act very much like those confused and perplexed disciples depicted in art and very much like the Conte from *Chocolat*. For Presbyterians, the Holy Spirit is probably the most uncomfortable person of the trinity. It is too chaotic and unpredictable for those of us who like things done decently and in order.

The Spirit blows open the doors of the church and brings with her freedom and inspires us to move and act, to embody our faith. As the prophet Joel tells us, the Spirit poured out on our flesh opens the doors to service and our hearts to hear and

respond to God's Call in our lives. Our daughters and sons shall prophesy, the young ones shall see visions and the old ones shall dream dreams.

Joel tells us that the Spirit does not discriminate, the Spirit is poured out upon both women and men and everyone shall prophesy.

AHHH, but that is risky. We can't control our dreams, we can not control the prophesy.

On that first Pentecost, the miracle of the Holy Spirit was not that the people could speak all those languages. The miracle of Pentecost was and is this: Pentecost power breaks through our control. It breaks through our inhibitions to proclaim a fundamental transformation. By the presence of Christ's Spirit holiness becomes accessible to all, even the fearful disciples. Human attempts to keep the Holy Spirit contained in one holy language or one holy place failed. Christ's sacrifice sent the Holy Spirit soaring out into the world.

That Holy Spirit is still with us today enabling ALL of us to preach by both word and deed. As we worship here this morning, the Spirit swirls in our midst, opening our eyes to God's work, touching our hearts, preparing each of us for service in the world. Even when we bar the doors, the Spirit of God blows and breaks into our consciousness, inspiring us to risk.

So, what are your dreams? What are your visions? Where is God calling you, maybe even pushing you to go and how can we help?

On this Sunday of Pentecost, may we have the courage to pray, Come HOLY SPIRIT! Amen.

Rev. Eric Dillenbeck, M.D.V.