

Scripture: Acts 2:1-21

Sermon Title: "It's 9 O'clock Somewhere"

Rev. Josh Fitterling

As our scripture reading today begins, with the events of Pentecost about to unfold, we initially find the disciples living in a period of waiting. After they had experienced so much in the last 50 days – the joys of Easter morning, the wonders of the 40 days shared with their Resurrected Christ, and the ascension of Jesus as he was taken into heaven, the disciples after so much excitement, now wait. They wait for the Holy Spirit which Jesus has promised will come. And once that happens, they will go and witness, go and preach, about Jesus. Until then, they wait. But today, the wait is over.

With the sound as of a rush of violent wind. Divided tongues that appeared to be of fire touching the disciples. The disciples speaking in languages that they have never spoken before. With these miraculous events, the Holy Spirit has come and the church has been born. Now, some who saw and experienced these events of Pentecost, were filled with awe and curiosity as they tried to understand what this meant. Still others sneered and tried to explain it away by criticizing and accusing the disciples of being drunk. Yet at these accusations, Peter felling moved by the Holy Spirit, stood to preach what was essentially the first sermon of the newborn church. At 9 o'clock in the morning, on Pentecost, he preached. At 9 o'clock in the morning, he shared with the gathered crowd about what was happening, and if we were to read beyond where our lesson took us today, we would hear how Peter spoke of Jesus, claiming him as Lord and Messiah. At 9 o'clock in the morning on Pentecost, Peter changed the hearts and lives of about 3,000 people, as scripture reports in Acts 2:41, and the church began to grow in response to the love and light of Jesus.

When you think about all that Pentecost held, this was quite a day – quite a morning we haven't even made it to noontime yet and all of this has transpired! And while the disciples knew that the Holy Spirit was coming, Jesus told them that, they didn't know

exactly when it would happen. This day was not one that they had circled on their calendar – “arrival of the Holy Spirit”. Yet just like that, in the flash of divided tongues of fire, in the blink of an eye, the church was born as the disciples felt and followed the guiding of the Holy Spirit. And in that moment, the disciples began to speak into the lives of those around them in powerful and transformative ways. They all began to speak having no time to prepare what they would say for they had a moment of inspiration, a gathered crowd, and the presence of God’s Holy Spirit to give them the words. And they did just what they were called to do in those very moments on Pentecost. They spoke into the lives of those gathered with them – into the lives of those who were in awe and those who criticized. They needed to say something – the Holy Spirit wouldn’t have it any other way.

Have you ever had a moment like that in your life? Maybe not started by rushes of wind, and divided tongues of fire from Heaven. I’m talking about those moments when you encounter someone, and in that time shared, you know that they need something – some words of hope, or encouragement, a listen ear, a supportive shoulder – and you know that you are one being called to give it. A moment that you did not prepare for, but one in which you are called to respond and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, you do just that. I’m guessing that we all have had those moments when we are called upon to speak into the lives of another, maybe not on as grand of a scale as Pentecost but an event that is not doubt important to the lives you are impacting. I’m recalling the story of clergy colleague of mine in the United Church of Christ. Now, as is more common in the German Reformed tradition of the UCC, he wore a clergy collar every Sunday. The traditional, black shirt with the white tab – not like this red one that I wear today in celebration of Pentecost! Anyway, he would wear this collar every Sunday for worship and one Sunday, he had to make a visit to see a member in the hospital. Now after he saw them and was ready to head home, he and a woman he never met before got on the elevator at the same time. The doors closed, it was just the two of them. And she looked at him and said, “Father, would you hear my confession”. Now, clearly she thought by

the way he was dressed that he was a Roman Catholic priest. So my friend said to her, "I would be glad to listen and support you, but you need to know that I am not a catholic priest, I am a protestant minister." And her response was priceless. She said, "That okay, it doesn't really matter if you are a priest or a minister. I'm Jewish anyway." In that moment, this woman just needed someone to talk to – someone to confide in. Someone who could offer words of love and hope into a challenging situation of her life. And in that moment when these two paths crossed for a couple minutes shared together, just like on Pentecost, the Spirit moved, words were spoken – unrehearsed words but Spirit-inspired, hope was given, lives were changed. They shared an encounter that was by no means planned, and a conversation that was not previously envisioned, yet it was one that was so very holy.

You know, as I was reading this scripture in preparation for today, I kept being drawn to the fact that Peter was addressing the crowd at 9 o'clock in the morning. A time that in itself doesn't bear any particular holiness, yet it was the time on Pentecost when Peter spoke love, and light, and hope into the lives of those gathered around him. He did not plan it, for the disciples did not know when the Holy Spirit would come, but he was moved by the Spirit to speak. In that instant, he was changing lives of those who were gathered. And in this unexpected moment, Peter lived out his faith and shared it at 9 o'clock in the morning. As I read this passage over and over, the thought that kept going through my mind every time I read this was that its 9 o'clock somewhere so don't be surprised when the Spirit moves through you! And that's what I want us all to take away. It's 9 o'clock somewhere so may we always be ready to change a life. May we always be ready to speak hope into the challenging situations of another. It's 9 o'clock somewhere so may we always be ready to love someone through the difficult moments and love them in the joys too! May we always be ready to share Jesus in all that we say and do. For its 9 o'clock somewhere and you just never know how the Holy Spirit will move in you and through you to speak life into a hurting world, to shine light into the corners of a darkened soul. And like the disciples, like my clergy friend, like all of us

from time-to-time, when these unexpected and unplanned moments arise, don't worry about what you will say or do when those moments come, just ask for God's Holy Spirit to give you what you need and trust that it will be given unto you. Allow our still speaking God to work and love through you.

As we celebrate the day of Pentecost, as we celebrate this moment when our still speaking God breathed life into the church and life into the world around them, may we go forth this day and every day for God, remembering that it is 9 o'clock somewhere. And that the Spirit may just be ready to move! So be it and may it be so. Amen.