

# Awakening to Budding Faith

A sermon in the Easter-Pentecost series “Spring Awakenings”

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- Acts 2 (selected verses) <sup>12</sup> Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other, “What does this mean?”
- Luke 18:31-34 <sup>34</sup> But the disciples did not understand any of these things; the meaning of the words was hidden from them, and they did not know what Jesus was talking about.
- Romans 13:11b The hour has already come for you to awake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.
- Sermon-in-a-sentence: In unconditional love, God accepts as we were, are, and will become.

The church season that began on Easter with an empty tomb concludes on this Day of Pentecost with the Holy Spirit on the loose. During this season corresponding with the renewal of Spring we’ve considered our own “Spring Awakening.” As my inspiration for our “Spring Awakening” I’ve used the apostle Paul’s verse from Romans 13: 11b, “The hour has already come for you to awake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.” Across these seven weeks we’ve explored awakening to second chances, awakening to boldness, awakening to nature, awakening to a new commandment, and awakening to appreciation. On this day when we prepare to welcome eighteen of our youth into full membership in the Church, I proposed that we consider awakening to budding faith.

I say “budding faith” intentionally. As trees and bushes continue their springtime stretch toward the sun and the buds on twig tips swell and begin to unravel and unfold, we might or we might not know just what that bud foretells. Will it be a leaf? A blossom? Green, or red or pink or yellow or white? It might be too early to tell.

The young people you’re going to meet in a few minutes – even though you’ve known most of them for most of their lives – these young people bring to mind the image of a budding branch because of their “budding faith.” These young people are in a marvelous and exciting and difficult growing phase of life. They’re growing so much in so many ways: intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually.

But just because they’re going through stages that many of us went through a long time ago, that does not make us superior to them, or they inferior to us. When the apostle Paul wrote a note of encouragement to his young co-worker Timothy, at one point he advised the young man, “Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers in your speech, your conduct, your love, faith, and purity.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul was saying, “Don’t feel inferior simply because you’re not as old as someone else or you don’t understand or you don’t know as much as someone else does.”

There were some people a long time ago who were pretty awesome people even though they didn’t always understand what was going on. We call them the disciples of Jesus.

Sometime you should thumb through the gospels and notice how many times the Bible remarks that the disciples “didn’t understand.” They didn’t understand what Jesus meant by his speeches and stories. They didn’t understand what Jesus was doing when he tried to prepare

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 4:12 Good News Translation

them to continue their ministry after he was gone. The original disciples frequently didn't get it, didn't completely understand.

But they had faith: they trusted what they did not know with certainty. And at some point, they started to "get it." Recall the story about the day of the Pentecost harvest festival in Acts Chapter 2, the familiar story of the moment when God gave the Holy Spirit to the group of believers. The disciples and other believers had an experience unlike anything they had ever known before.

- An unexplainable noise filled the air, sounding like a strong wind.
- A power seemed to sweep across the believers the way flames rush across a field of dry brush.

Despite the many differences that existed among the believers – different nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, variety of ages and social classes – this shared experience caused them to realize that what they had in common made those distinctions irrelevant, because they were "one in the Spirit, one in the Lord."

Bystanders witnessing all this didn't understand. So the apostle Peter had to explain it to them: "Believe that Jesus is God's son and your master, and God's Holy Spirit will empower you as well." And the faith of the believers and the bystanders took root and began to sprout, bud, blossom, grow.

The message of Pentecost, then – the message for young confirmands... and more seasoned believers... and everyone in between – the message is this: in this time of "Spring Awakening" we realize that the faith that each of us has is a "budding faith." Don't think that the faith you embrace is better or worse than anyone else's. Don't think that the faith you hold is stronger or weaker than that of someone else. The faith you hold is "good enough." It's good enough because through unconditional love our God accepts us as we are, as we were, and as we will be.