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Acts 2: 1-21

“And it Filled the Entire House”

May 28, 2023 – Pentecost Year A ~ Rocky River Presbyterian Church

NRSV ACTS 2:1-21

When 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.’

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

“Let it Fill the Entire House”

To me, there is nothing funnier than a good “Before and After” photo.

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, make-up, great clothes. The difference is always HUGE. The person just looks happier and full of life. The story of Pentecost from the book of Acts 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 where the book of Acts tells us Jesus was lifted by a cloud out of their sight – he is no longer with them. After having witnessed this, they returned to a private room in Jerusalem. They 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.

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.

This means that Jerusalem was packed with Jews from every nation. The city was literally teeming with pilgrims who had come to celebrate Pentecost.

So, on Pentecost, the Disciples and other believers are together in a room, safely tucked away, sitting and praying, trying to figure out what to do next; trying to discern together how they are called to be in 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, They have abandoned the safety of their quiet, closed off room, and are now 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 that locked room and into the whole world.

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 - Luke, uses the word “SUDDENLY!”

Suddenly, things went crazy...Suddenly, things got really loud...suddenly the disciples were out there for the world to see. You can imagine that 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 a category 4 hurricane blew through my hometown of Charleston, SC. Instead of fleeing the state, my family took refuge inside the thick walls of the Dock Street Theater, one of the oldest buildings in the city. 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 the most truth for me reminded me that the in-breaking Spirit can be unsettling!

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 uses the imagery of wind to allude to the power of the Spirit at work in the community. The movie is set in a French town which is ruled over by a very strict Count, who is the assumed moral authority.

In one particularly powerful scene, the Spirit blows open the church doors, but the Count very quickly bolts the doors against the wind.

For all his devotion, the Count 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 Count!

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 Count from *Chocolat*.

For Presbyterians, the Holy Spirit is probably the most uncomfortable member of the Trinity. The Spirit is too chaotic and unpredictable for those of us who like to make our plans and honor our traditions.

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.

The apostle Paul builds on this, he reminds the church in Corinth and all of us that the Spirit does not discriminate; the Spirit is poured out upon both women and men and everyone receives gifts to be used for the common good. AHHH, but that is risky. We cannot control dreams, we cannot control prophesy, we cannot control miracles, we cannot control gifts that are given.

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 everyone, even the fearful disciples. Human attempts to keep the Holy Spirit contained in one holy language or one holy place fail time and time again. Christ's sacrifice sends 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.

As Rocky River journeys through this interim time, the Spirit IS AT WORK. The Spirit is inspiring your hearts and your minds – preparing you for the work needed to proclaim God’s gracious Good News in the world today.

So, what are your dreams? What are your visions? Where is God calling you, maybe even pushing you to go? How is the Spirit of Pentecost Power pushing open the doors of Rocky River Presbyterian Church? How is the Spirit of God pushing us to spread the Good News of Jesus’ love for the world?

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