

I was struck by how our reading from the book of Acts begins, "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." It actually made me a little sad because we're not all together in one place. We're all stuck at home. But then I thought again, and actually in a way, we are all together in one place. We're together in a hard place. We're all feeling isolated and vulnerable. Using the language from our reading from St. John, we are all ones who thirst. We thirst for hope, for courage, for peace. We all need to hear again, the Pentecost message that God is with us by his Spirit.

Pentecost is the fulfillment of the Bible's promise that God will come to his people and be present with them. St. Peter recognized that when he stood before the crowd that gathered there that day, and he read from the book of the Prophet Joel, "In the last days," God said, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Peter recognized that that day had come. He might also well have been thinking of what Jesus said to him and the other disciples the night before Jesus died. He said this, "I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you."

At Pentecost, Jesus fulfilled the promise he made to his disciples and to all believers. To use the language of St. John again, Jesus promised that he would come to his people by his Spirit and dwell in them and make his home with them. That's the wonder of Pentecost, which we celebrate today. God is with us. He's with us now, even in these dark days of pandemic. The Holy Spirit who dwells within us, it's a transforming Spirit. And transformation is a word that's kept recurring for us throughout the Easter season. And so too has the realization that the resurrection in the first instance seems to have made little impression, brought about little change to the disciples.

We saw a few weeks ago, how after they'd met the risen Lord Jesus, they went back to their old ways. They picked up their nets and started fishing again. And last week, 40 days after the resurrection, they were left as we found them today, huddled together behind a locked door in a room in Jerusalem. What transforms the disciples is what

we're reading about today. It's the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Pentecost story begins with them gathered in one place, waiting, fearful, not knowing what to do next. Then the Spirit comes upon them like a rushing wind, like tongues of fire, rests on them and they are transformed. The people were amazed that they spoke in another language, but the real miracle is that they were speaking at all. Up to this point, the disciples hadn't seen fit to tell anybody about Jesus, but here's Peter who denied knowing Jesus just a few weeks before boldly preaching to anyone who'd listen.

I read a story in a paper about a man called Chris Andrews, who was one of those disastrous DIY people who spends his spare time seeking to improve things around the house. There's a lot more of them about in these days. But Chris Andrews was a particularly unfortunate example of the type. The article cataloged a whole series of various incidents that had occurred to him. And I'll pick up the story after one catastrophe, which had actually made him more safety conscious, thankfully. And it says when he decided to put some speakers on the wall, he turned off the electricity. Unable to understand why his electric drill had stopped working, he took it apart to see if he could find the fault. He found no fault. But then as he tried to put it back together again, he failed because he'd forgotten where the pieces went. So he went out to Home Depot and bought another drill. He was about to make a return trip to Home Depot, when his wife came home and reminded him that the drill wasn't working because he turned the electricity off.

What happened at Pentecost is like the electricity being turned back on. The disciples found a power supply that they hadn't had before and that power transformed them. And that power is available to all Christian people. We don't have to try and fiddle around like Chris Andrews with a power supply turned off.

St. Paul writes this, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised

Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit, which dwells in you." The story of Pentecost as described in the book of Acts is a fantastical one, full of images and details that challenge our imagination, tongues of fire, rushing wind, mass baptism. But at its heart, this is a story without spectacle and drama. It's about the Holy Spirit transforming ordinary imperfect, frightened individuals into the body of Christ. That's where the miracle lies. The disciples were given the power to preach. Where do you need God's power in your life to make a difference, to be transformative?

Something else I noticed about the Spirit in these passages are the verbs which are associated with the coming of the Spirit: rushing, flowing, pouring. When the Holy Spirit comes, there's a dynamism. All those verbs are dynamic. When the New Testament speaks of being filled with the Spirit, that's an ongoing process. It's not that we're filled up with the Spirit once and off we go, we go on being filled with the Spirit. It's a process. We're called to be rivers of living waters, not reservoirs.

I threw away a can of shaving cream this morning. I'd started to think it was a magic can. It was nearly empty at Christmas and it kept going nearly till June. I marveled at the way it lasted so long. I thought it was giving me an endless supply of shaving cream. Then I realized it wasn't that it was magic. It'd gone on so long because I've hardly shaved for three months. That's why it lasted so long. The Holy Spirit is not like my shaving cream. The Spirit never comes to an end. The Spirit is being poured into our hearts. The flow of God's Spirit speaks to me of constant change and development. The life of the Spirit is not static, and yet, we often resist the prompting of God's Spirit to move and to develop. We hold onto things. We say, well, this was inspired by God, or this time was a time of inspiration, and we clean on. But this pandemic is forcing us to change and develop. We're all having to change. I think we'll find that God by his spirit is with us in this change.

At church, we need to find new ways of worshipping together and engaging with God. When we slowly resume in stages our in-person worship on June 21st, there will be big differences to how we've done things before. Our services will have to change, but God by his Spirit will be with us in those changes.

The Spirit was not only present in the way things used to be. The Spirit will be enlivening the way we do things in the future. We'll be looking to keep in step with the Spirit as we move forward. And what is true for the church is true for us as individuals, God is in the change. God is with us in the ebb and flow of life. He is present with us at all times. Let's look to walk with God in the new ways that he is opening for us, to be prepared, to be led into new things, to seize new opportunities. May God continue to pour his Spirit into our hearts. Amen.