

05.24.26 ~ Pentecost & Memorial Sunday

“Baptism by Wind & Fire”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Words of Praise

Psalm 104:24-34 ^{NKJV}

Pew Bible 523

²⁴ O Lord, how manifold are Your works!

In wisdom You have made them all.

The earth is full of Your possessions—

²⁵ This great and wide sea,

In which *are* innumerable teeming things,

Living things both small and great.

²⁶ There the ships sail about;

There is that Leviathan

Which You have made to play there.

²⁷ These all wait for You,

That You may give *them* their food in due season.

²⁸ *What* You give them they gather in;

You open Your hand, they are filled with good.

²⁹ You hide Your face, they are troubled;

You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

³⁰ You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;

And You renew the face of the earth.

³¹ May the glory of the Lord endure forever;

May the Lord rejoice in His works.

³² He looks on the earth, and it trembles;

He touches the hills, and they smoke.

³³ I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

³⁴ May my meditation be sweet to Him;

I will be glad in the Lord.

Leader: These Are the Psalmist’s Words of Exaltation.

People: Thanks be to God!

Words of Pentecost

Acts 2:1-16 ^{NLT}

Pew Bible 948

¹ On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵ At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. ⁶ When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

⁷ They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, ⁸ and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹ Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” ¹² They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.

¹³ But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

Peter Preaches to the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews, and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶ No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel.

Leader: These Are the Words & Actions of God!

People: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

God, you are the comforter, nurturer, and provider of all that we need. We proclaim it because Christ is still risen and ever-present in our lives. Through his sacrifice, we are forgiven and saved for all eternity. We cannot see you, but today, figuratively we feel you in the rushing winds and fire of Pentecost; we feel your assurance in dark times, your correction, and divine guidance. We long to be in your presence, to feel wonder and experience the awe of the miraculous. Again, this week, we ask you to help us enter into the areas of faith we do not understand: illness, pain, struggle, testing, and the supernatural. Help us to open our minds and hearts to trust what we do not understand and to have peace within. Please speak through these Scriptures, this message, and messenger. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Yes, it has been one of those weeks and days, but I have Jesus! That may sound Pentecostal or more charismatic than we calm Baptists, but it is appropriate for today! I also had music, some new friends at John Calvin Presbyterian Church, these Scriptures, and you all to look forward to for today! I thank you for your presence and steadfastness in the midst of life’s unpredictability. Happy Pentecost Sunday! Thank you for

wearing red! It is both Memorial Sunday and Pentecost and that happens only occasionally. Last week in the church calendar Jesus ascended to be with his father in heaven. I imagine that his disciples after having seen many appearances since the resurrection were a bit disappointed or felt that Jesus was abandoning them. Most followers had dropped everything to spend a little over three (3) years together in ministry, witnessing miracles, healing, and serving people; and then, it was over? Now what?! They might have been wondering. Even if we've lost someone we've known and loved for 25-50 years, we often ask the same question, now what? Once they are no longer visible to us, how do we go on? How do we live without parents? Without my spouse? My child?

Today, with our roll call of the saints, we remembered friends, family, missionaries, and military personnel who died this past 12 months. Time moves so fast that we forget to pause and reflect. Memorial Day gives us this annual opportunity to take that time. Some place flags at Arlington Cemetery; others ride motorcycles to honor our Veterans. Some conduct rituals or put flowers on gravesites. Feelings surface unexpectedly; like the disciples may have been experiencing, sadness or anger pops up – he or she has gone and left us here to deal with everything (they may have been thinking).

With friends and family members, however, we have memories, photos, siblings, children, and other connections to see us through grief. We are never over grief, but we journey alongside it. Hopefully, we also have happy memories to hold onto. The disciples, however, had unpleasant memories. They had been persecuted by the Jews and the Romans; they feared for their lives; they were in hiding. Yet Jesus had

been sensitive about their needs, so he assured them that he would send supernatural comfort to them, the Holy Spirit to live within them and to advocate for them. This Counselor or Advocate would not only comfort but communicate and intercede. The Holy Spirit would help them continue to preach and share Jesus' teachings and bring back to mind all Jesus had taught.

Today begins the liturgical church season between the Day of Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter, through the first Sunday of Advent; it is called Ordinary Time. For the church calendar, the Day of Pentecost is the day when 120 disciples were gathered "at home" or in one place in Jerusalem, and the spirit of the Lord descended like a dove on them. Although the witnessing Jews knew that these affected were all Galileans, the disciples spoke in different languages from their birth towns yet could understand one another! The diversity of the culture makes this an amazing feat, made the Jews skeptical, and even perplexed those present who experienced the miracle.

Before they saw the dove, there was a thundering sound, like a rushing wind. Like the worst hurricane you've ever been in. It filled the house and was terrifying at first. Can you hear it in your imagination? I hear intense winds, groaning of buildings, roaring like an approaching freight train, all creating a fearful flight response in the brain. Can you hear the rushing wind descending? "God's way is in the whirlwind and the storm (Nahum 1:3)," and out of the whirlwind he spoke to Job. So, wind is a typical communication tool, not just this miracle. Having so many languages being spoken all at the same time must have felt chaotic to those present. At *Celebrate Life, the Musical*, last evening, the trial

scene said, “create a cacophony of sound” so the chorus yelled “kill him, crucify, curses, we want Barrabas!” Although the words would have been more spiritual and not hateful at the Pentecost event, being more about Baptism in the spirit, I imagine the sounds and sights were chaos and confusion. Can you hear the many languages spoken through the Spirit and tongues of fire? In our diverse DMV, this part of the passage feels relevant. Just look at the many ethnic churches as you drive around our area.

The King James Version uses the term, “cloven tongues of fire,” and that is what brings us to wear red, so that we remember. It appeared to be “something like flaming fire lighting on every one of them, which divided, and so formed the resemblance of tongues” reaching toward the heavens, according to one commentary. A candle flame is too tame and small to imagine the sensation, but in a campfire or a fireplace, if you stare at the flames, you’ll see them divide and reach upward; or as a log burns up, you can see the flames inside the log sparkle like lightning. Can you see the separate tongues of fire resting on those gathered? Fire was another important symbol from God because the feast of Pentecost, significant in both the Old and New Testaments, is actually the Greek name for a festival known as the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:9). The Greek word means “fifty” and refers to the fifty days that have elapsed since the wave offering of Passover and connecting Moses later at the burning bush receiving the Ten Commandments. The Feast of Weeks celebrated the end of the grain harvest but the New Testament Pentecost marks the beginning of the

Christian church's mission to the world, and some say the beginning of the Christian church itself.

So, as we remember the saints that helped build our churches and now our united, consolidated church, plus the two others who worship in our buildings, let us give thanks and gratitude for their work, their prayers, their faith, and even their death because we know they are with the Lord in Heaven, and that is all the encouragement we need to share our testimonies of faith with others. Let us remember our loved ones and celebrate the coming of and presence of the Holy Spirit. Let us joyfully live out the psalm we read this morning, giving God all the glory and praise. We ask for God's blessing on this serving church and all its people. Amen. ||

Please pray with me: Holy Spirit, Come! We thank you for your presence within us and our fellowship today. We thank you for the spiritual gifts you share with us, including strength, boldness, hospitality, and resilience; we thank you even for the suffering that makes us stronger or shares a testimony of your power in our lives. Help us to glorify you in all we do, think, or say. Deepen our faith and strengthen our resolve to follow your teachings, living lives acceptable to you. We ask for wisdom to navigate crises when they occur. We ask for courage to seek help when we need it and to proclaim your mercy and amazing grace. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.