

Come Sunday: A Narrative Lectionary-Based Bible Study

Pentecost Sunday (Year One)

Acts 2:1-21 and Romans 8:18-39

*In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young will see visions.
Your elders will dream dreams.*
-Acts 2:17

Introduction

I was always looking forward to the family summer vacation. Dad would back up the car to make it easy to put our luggage in. Mom would fill a picnic basket with items to eat or drink along the way. Dad would also get the old igloo ice chest, fill it with ice and place cans of pop and lunch meats, again for the journey ahead. I was over the moon as the car pulled out of the driveway and made its way to freeway and our chosen destination.

What was so exciting about that car trip? In most cases, we were going to places we had been to before. But that didn't matter to me. Just being on the journey was exciting- even if I had travelled the road before.

The texts in this study relate to Pentecost, what is normally called the birthday of the church. It is the day that the Spirit makes itself known to the world through Jesus' disciples. The story begins with the disciples gathered in a room in Jerusalem. Jesus told them to wait there until the Spirit comes. I'm guessing that the disciples didn't understand what was going to happen. It was already hard enough to understand Jesus dying, rising again and the floating away. What was the Spirit? What was its importance?

Today's passage in Romans is one where Paul is excited. He tells the church at Rome about the wonders of belonging to God. We had a God that prays for us, taking our

It [Pentecost] is the day that the Spirit makes itself known to the world through Jesus' disciples.

grunts and sighs to heart. We have a God that is with us not only in the good times, but in the bad times as well. When Paul tell the Romans that "that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God," he isn't trying to be glib about tragedy. Paul is telling us that even when the unthinkable happens, God is with us. We belong to God and while evil is around now, it will never, ever have the last word.

Paul ends this passage with two wonderful sentences telling the Romans and us that nothing, nothing can separate us from God's love. Paul says, "I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created." We are loved by God, no matter what.

Our study talks about the birth of the church and the reminder that God is always with us.

Verse One Church and Verse Two Church

When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting.

-Acts 2:1-2

Right from the start, the writer gives us two communities of faith made up of the same people. In verse one we see that all of Jesus disciples and friends are together in one room. This "church" was a place of community, where people gathered.

The word together in verse one is better understood to mean they were united. Who wouldn't want a church like this?

But do you see what is missing? The group is gathered in one room. There is no venturing forth into the outside, no mission.

2 Come Sunday Bible Study

ομου + επι το αυτο: *The word means "all together" in English. A better understanding is that the disciples were "united."*

φερημενης (φερω; "carry") *This means the wind is carrying a wind.*

βιαιος or biaias *In English this word means "violent." This word was used in the parting of the Red Sea by Moses. In other Greek literature, this word is used to describe the strength of Hercules.*

Verse two gives us another church. Now we have what seems like a mighty wind entering the room. They begin speaking in different tongues. They couldn't just stay in that room. They had to get out, they had to get out and make their praises known to God publicly. And so they did just that, when it just so happens a religious festival is taking place with Jews from around the known world. They were amazed as they heard these uneducated country hicks from Galilee praise God in their mother tongues.

The pre-Pentecost church in verse one is like a lot of churches today- a gathering of people who stay inside the church doors. Verse two is a place where the Spirit is present and the people have to get out of the door. There are churches like this. But the reality is that many of our churches are between Church One and Church Two.

Peter then explains to the crowd what is happening. He refers to the prophet Joel which says that in the last days God's spirit will be poured out among all flesh, men and women, young and old. Even slaves would receive the Spirit of God.

The Spirit's arrival pushed the disciples out of the upper room and into the rest of the world. There was no more staying in a room, everyone was on a journey to witness the wonderful deeds of God through Jesus.

Pentecost is about the arrival of the Spirit and the beginning of the Church. But the Holy Spirit we see here is one that is not gentle or the Comforter that Jesus talks about in the book of John. The Spirit is described in some fantastic and frightening ways. The Spirit isn't comforting anyone in Acts. Instead they are being shaken up. Words to describe the Spirit include a violent wind, or fire. Other words include bewildered, amazed and astonished. The Spirit can be a comforter, but the third person of Trinity is also an Agitator that can compel the church outside of the walls of our church buildings.

Nothing Separates

I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers³⁹ or height or depth, or any other thing that is created.

-Romans 8:38-39

The passage in Romans is one where Paul is excited. He tells the church at Rome about the wonders of belonging to God. We had a God that prays for us, taking our grunts and sighs to heart. We have a good that is with us not only in the good times, but in the bad times as well. When Paul tell the Romans that " that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God," he isn't trying to be glib about tragedy. Paul is telling us that even when the unthinkable happens, God is with us. We belong to God and while evil is around now, it will never, ever have the last word.

Paul ends this passage with two wonderful sentences telling the Romans and us that nothing, nothing can separate us from God's love. Paul says, "I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created." We are loved by God, no matter what.

Paul is telling Christians in Rome that all creation is waiting for God, waiting for hope. He tells them that the Spirit is there, helping people in their weakness and interceding for us with "sighs to deep for words." The Spirit is present with us in our daily walk, allowing us to be with others when their lives fall apart.

υιοθεσια or huiothesian means "adoption" in English. There was no precedence in using this word before Paul wrote them to describe our relationship with God.

Σαρξ (sarx) this is the Greek word for flesh. Paul's view on the flesh changes throughout the book of Romans.

Questions

1. What do you think about the Holy Spirit? Is it peaceful or aggressive?
2. How has your church been gathered in one place? What examples are there of the Spirit sending the community outside of the walls?

Written by Dennis Sanders.