

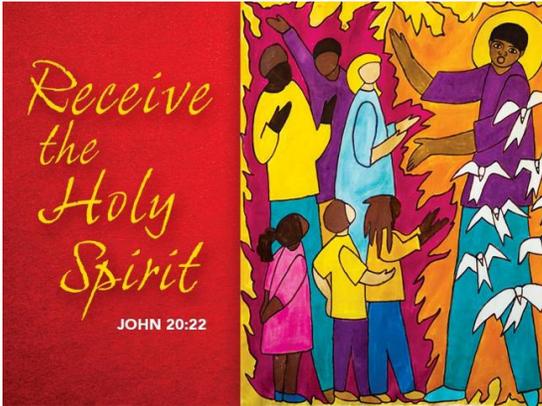
Sunday, May 31, 2020

Pentecost Sunday

Grace Lutheran Church

Somers Point, NJ 08244

Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf



Let us pray. The Lord be with you: and also with you. We call on your spirit of unity, giving thanks for our different vocations. Activate and utilize the diverse gifts present in your church, that they reveal your love for all. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. We call on the spirit of righteousness. Wherever we as a people are divided, unite us. Wherever we are prideful, humble us. Give each one of us a heart for justice and empathy. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. We call on your spirit of healing. Bless nurses, doctors, midwives, chaplains, counselors, and hospice workers as they care for those in need. We pray for all who long for comfort, especially Minneapolis communities, areas of violence, those in fear and uncertainty, victims of the pandemic, victims of injustice. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We call on your spirit of hope. As you have led your saints in all times and places, stir in us the desire to follow their example. Leading us from death to new life in you. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

I remember when I started at St. David Lutheran church as the new pastor; one member asked me why I pray so much, "just preach your sermon." I would start with a prayer and end with a prayer and even add a prayer in the middle of the sermon. I understand she wanted the same style of preaching from the previous pastor. Jesus prayed and taught the disciples to pray and passed down the Lord's Prayer to us and I love to pray.

On Pentecost, the disciples were together in prayer waiting for the Holy Spirit as stated in the Acts of the Apostles. A seminary professor used to say, "If you haven't read it

yet, read it again.." If you haven't read it yet, read it again, which I picked up from my devotional reading way back. We need to be called back to the things we already know. I think faith is broadened more often by being reminded...than by learning something new.

Let me share a mission statement from another church. We are people God has called to: To hear the story, know the story, tell the story. Live the story.

How appropriate for Pentecost Sunday where the apostles praying together suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit speaking out loud in different languages about God's deeds of power come out telling the crowds. Chaos, noisy, the birth bangs of the Church meeting the people who responded to listen and receive the Word of God. I served at Muhlenberg Memorial Evangelical Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, the Logan section. The outreach program which we implemented was called the Welcome Place. A simple outline of a church with a rainbow was the banner we used but we added the greetings of the residents in our area. Languages from Korea, Ethiopia, China, Pakistan, Ukraine, India, Spanish, German, Cambodia and others. We invited our neighbors to share in the message of God's love.

Not everyone perceived this power of the Holy Spirit. They saw the apostles drunk with wine and said so to describe this outburst of languages. This reminds me of the story in *The World According to Mister Rogers*. He writes, "One Summer, midway through seminary, I was on a weekend vacation in a little town in New England. I decided on Sunday to go hear a visiting preacher... I heard the worst sermon I could have ever imagined. I sat in the pew thinking, 'He's going against every rule they're teaching us about preaching. What a waste of time!' That's what I thought until the very end of the sermon when I happened to see the person beside me with tears in her eyes whispering, 'He said exactly what I needed to hear.' It was then that I knew something very important had happened in that service. The woman beside me had come in need. Somehow the words of that poorly crafted sermon had been translated into a message that spoke to her heart. On the other hand, I had come in judgment, and I heard nothing but the faults. It was a long time before I realized it, but that sermon's effect on the person beside me turned out to be one of the great lessons of my life. Thanks to the preacher and listener-in-need, I know that the space between a person doing his or her best to deliver a message of good news and the needy listener is holy ground. Recognizing that seems to have allowed me to forgive myself for being the accuser that day. In fact, that New England Sunday experience has fueled my desire to be a better advocate, a better 'neighbor,' wherever I am."

St. Peter quickly responded as to say this is not drunk power using prophet Joel's prophesy. I will again use First Thessalonians 1:5...our message of the Gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and the Holy Spirit and with full conviction... we are people God has called to live the story.

I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together all who follow Jesus all around the world, yes we're the church together. I still remember this song. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. In my devotions on the Psalms I came across this fact, the ancient writers called Psalm 67 the Lord's Prayer of the Old Testament. Let me read 3 verses: "May God be merciful and bless us. May his face shine with favor upon us. May your ways be known throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere. May the nations praise you, O God, Yes, may all the nations praise you." Sounds familiar (Numbers 6:24-26), May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace.