

Welcome to Germantown Church of God, in Cascade, MD. I am glad that you are joining me today for this time of prayer and study. I hope that our time together will be helpful and meaningful.

Last week I talked about the Church Calendar. The Church Calendar designates special days and times in the life and ministry of Jesus, so that we can remember what He did and taught. The Calendar also designates special days for the life of the Church. Sunday May 31 is Pentecost Sunday. Pentecost Sunday is the 50th day after Resurrection of Jesus, 10 days after His Ascension into heaven. Pentecost is a Jewish feast day, a day to honor and worship God for the Harvest. Many Jewish people would come to Jerusalem, to offer sacrifices from their harvest to the Lord to express their thanks to Him for His goodness and care for the nation. It was on this occasion when Jesus fulfilled His promise to send the Holy Spirit to His followers. Here is how the story is recorded. **Acts 2:1-12**. The Apostle Peter in a sermon explained to the onlookers what they were seeing, and he concludes his message with these words: **Verse 26-41**. We celebrate this day as the birthday of the Church. We continue to believe that Jesus offers the gift of His Spirit to all who believe in Him, to all who Repent and Believe as Peter promised. The gift of the Spirit is the gift of His presence with us always, the gift of His power to accomplish His work in this world. **I hope that you have a longing to be filled with His Spirit, just as these first followers of Jesus did.**

Opening Prayer:

- Continue our prayers for our world against this Covid 19
- But another ugly disease has been uncovered again in our nation. You probably have heard about the tragic death of a man named George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis Police officer. His death has made it evident that the disease and sin of Racism continues to threaten one of the ideals that our nation was founded on – **that All Men are created equal**. Floyd's death has opened up a wound and that has resulted in violent expressions of anger and outrage. We must pray as passionately against this sin and evil as we do against the spread of a dangerous virus. We must pray that God will heal our nation. Jesus teaches us that we must love our neighbors as ourselves and we must demonstrate that love through our deeds and actions. Jesus puts no limits on who our neighbor is. It is time for us as followers of Jesus to take this teaching seriously.

Announcements:

- Resuming Sunday morning Worship gatherings – but videos will continue to be posted. We are not out of the woods yet. The virus continues to be a dangerous situation. So please choose to worship in a manner that ensures your safety and the safety of those in your household.
- Thursday evening prayer gathering (call for information about how to join in)
- Congratulations to 2020 graduates – Please send information about graduates who are connected to our Church Family

Promise – Is. 26:3

Sermon Text:

Acts 1:1-11

Message: The text may sound familiar to you if you have been keeping up with us on these video messages. It is the same text we looked at last week. Last week we looked at the last verses of the passage, the story of the Ascension. Today we are going to focus our attention on the earlier verses in the text, **particularly verses 4-8**. What happened on the Day of Pentecost, is a **fulfillment of the promise that Jesus made in these verses**. What happened on the day of Pentecost brought a lot of change for the followers of Jesus. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit to begin to fulfill the mission that Jesus gave them. It was not what they expected to happen. A few weeks ago, I saw an article by Thom Ranier, entitled, **“Your Church is now a blank slate.”** As Churches begin to resume meeting together for their Worship Gatherings, Ranier says that we should see this as a time to do new things. He says that there is much about the ministry of the Church that will not change – Our view of Scripture, Our understanding that salvation can be found in Christ alone, and

other doctrines that we believe. But we have the opportunity to do some new things. We can use new tools. We don't have to do things the way we've always done it in the past.

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus was presenting his followers with a clean slate. Their lives would be different from this day on. Their work would be done differently than they had expected and than they had known in the past. I think that is the emphasis of this interaction between Jesus and the disciples in these verses.

Jesus' Warning. This dialogue takes place 40 days after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Jesus has been teaching them. He has proven to them in many ways that He really was alive, He was no longer dead. On this particular day, they are gathered together again. Jesus knows what is about to happen. He will be taken up to heaven, leaving His followers here in this world. Before He is taken up He gives them this warning: **"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized you with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."** On the night that Jesus was betrayed He spent time with them in the Upper Room, teaching them. In that time of teaching he promised: **¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. (John 14:16-17).** Jesus was about to leave them and return to heaven, but He would not leave them alone. He would send the Spirit to be with them and to empower them. But they were to **wait for this gift.** Waiting is hard. Certainly we have had to re-learn that during the time of this pandemic. But we must not rush ahead of God. Sometimes we have to wait in order to be effective in our service to Him. Jesus has not left us as His followers alone in this world. He has come to us through the Holy Spirit to live in us and to empower us to live for Him.

The Question: When the disciples heard Jesus talking about the promised coming of the Holy Spirit, that seems to have prompted a question in their heart. As was true of many of the Jewish people around this time, they believed in a promised re-establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. The Jewish people had been living under the control of foreign kings and rulers for many years. They were not an independent kingdom as they had been in the past. Many longed for a time when the Kingdom would be re-established and look like it did in the glory years of King David. They believed that would happen when Messiah came. That re-establishment would be accompanied by a renewed activity of the Spirit of God. The disciple's anticipation was political, but Jesus had something else in mind.

As the disciples anticipated the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Israel, it seems that their interests may have been **self-centered.** The disciples expected that when the Kingdom was established, they would be given influential positions of power in the Kingdom. On several occasions, the disciples argued among themselves about which one of them was Jesus' favorite. In Mark chapter 10, two of them – James and John – came to Jesus with this request – **"Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory"** (10:37). So even now, the disciples are jockeying for positions of influence in Jesus' kingdom. **The disciples had their own agenda for Jesus.** But Jesus has something else, something better in mind.

Jesus' Answer: Jesus does not say that there is no future Kingdom. But he does let them know that it is not for them to know the times or dates that the Father has set by His own authority. Figuring out these dates is not to be the obsession of God's people. He alone is sovereign and He will determine when the consummation will occur. Followers of Jesus are to be obsessed with other things.

There is another concern that the followers of Jesus needed to be concerned about. Jesus says **"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"** Listen again to the question of the disciples – **"Lord are YOU at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel."** The focus of the disciples' question was "When are YOU..." Jesus response is not focused on doing what the disciples felt HE should do, but on **what HE wanted them to do.** Something new is about to happen, but it won't be ME, it will be YOU doing it: **When the Holy Spirit comes on you, You will be my witnesses.** The influence and reign of Jesus is going to take place but it will take place through what you are going to do. All who are followers of Jesus are to become His witnesses and are to be spreading the influence and reign of Jesus in the world.

There is a second thing to note in Jesus' response to His followers. The question the disciples asked was **Are you going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?** When are you going to take care of US, and people like us? When are you going to bring people like us into your Kingdom again. But Jesus response emphasizes that

what He is about to do is not just for Israel, but for Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. This new work that Jesus will do will be for all people of all nations. Now that was a totally foreign concept to this followers of Jesus. Though it does not appear that they grasped the universal nature of the Kingdom on this day, it would soon become apparent to them. As we read the story of the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Jesus' followers were given a sign that something new had happened to them – the gift of tongues. People who were standing around on that day from other lands, heard about God in their own language. **Jesus is for ALL people.** God is a missionary God, a God who is concerned about people from all nations. God is concerned about people who are like us, as well as those who are different from us. **It is my prayer** that followers of Jesus would understand again that Life is not about Me. Life is about Jesus and how God wants to use US to spread the news about Him to everyone.

As we move forward out of this time of pandemic, I hope we will not be thinking about “getting back to normal”, or “getting our Churches to look like they did before the pandemic came.” I hope that we will pray for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit so that we can get on with the work of reaching others with the good news about Jesus. The good news about He can cleanse our lives from sin. The good news about how he can transform our lives and make us more like Him. The good news about how He alone is the hope of the world.

So there are some important lessons for us in this passage:

- When we become a follower of Jesus **we must lay aside our own agenda, and adopt Jesus' agenda** for our lives. Our life is no longer about US. It's about what Jesus wants us to do.
- When we become followers of Jesus we are all baptized with HIS Spirit **so that we can become HIS witnesses** to others. Nobody is left out. You are all called to be His witness. How is that going for you? When was the last time you spoke about Jesus to someone else?
- The day of Pentecost means that Jesus isn't just for people like us. **Jesus is the Savior for ALL people.**

Closing Prayer

See you next week