

Pentecostal Fire

[John 14:6-17, 25-27, Acts 2:1-21](#)

Pentecostal fire – can you feel it? There are a lot of properties about fire that we don't like. Fire can be destructive. Fire can be dangerous. Fire can be painful. Fire has a way of changing things forever. Many here are lifelong firefighters, whose job is to put out fires – quench them with water to cool the flames. In the literal sense, fire is something to be avoided and not to be taken lightly.

But we talk about fire in other ways as well. Poets will use the term 'fire' to equal passion – something that sparks often between two people that is so powerful, 'fire' seems to be the only way to best explain it. We use the term 'fire' in the business world and the sports world, when we want to get our troops and teams 'fired-up'. We want them pumped up full of energy and positive image so that nothing can stand in their way

of success. We use ‘fire’ to mean enthusiasm and endurance and strength and undying courage. We use all these meanings when we talk about fire. Many of us felt a real fire when we were up against the ‘Goliath’ of the county commissioners trying to designate our buildings as historic. We were definitely ‘fired up’ to speak out against this as it would harm our ability to do ministry. There is no doubt we were ‘fired-up.’

But what about this Pentecostal fire? How can we get a handle on what was happening on this special day in the history of the church? The author of the book of Acts seems to have trouble describing it as well. First let us set the scene. The disciples, who numbered about 120 at this time, were all together in an upper room. This is significant. From the time of Jesus’ ascension the disciples had been meeting in small groups around town, but they stayed in Jerusalem because Jesus told

them to. They needed to be together in one accord for the Holy Spirit to take action. They needed community.

On this particular day, they were all together in a large upper room. Most likely they were praying, singing hymns, maybe even sharing scripture from the prophets. What does that sound like to you? To me it sounds like a church service. Think about it – everyone came together at a designated time and place. The doors were closed as people settled in to worship God. Familiar hymns were sung, readings from the prophets of old were read. Perhaps there was even some sharing of testimony about what was happening in the smaller, house-church meetings. Maybe they were talking about those who had been healed or touched by the story of Jesus as the Messiah. Maybe they were listening to the concerns of others as they

found ways to love their neighbors. Folks – this sounds like church!

Maybe in some ways this group was in the anticipation stage of something great on the horizon. Maybe they too could feel the bubbling under the surface as they were about to be changed forever. I have been feeling that here for some time. It seems we turned an important corner when we came together in love and worship to set our rudder and our guide on Jesus Christ. There is something here that we may not have seen yet but is just on the horizon. The Holy Spirit is already at work here, amen? There is something fire-like about this renewal and strength that we are experiencing to boldly take our next faithful step as this body of Christ. We are marching in the light of God, amen?

So we have the equivalent of a church service going on with the disciples in one place and in one accord. God knows when God's people are truly gathered together. God knows when we are 'here' in every sense of the word. This group of disciples was also ready to take their next faithful step, and God was not going to leave them to do it alone. The scripture tells us that a sound like the rush of a might wind filled the entire house. Then there was the visual reassurance of tongues of fire sweeping over everyone in the house, men and women. They were given a very specific gift of the Holy Spirit – the ability to speak in other languages. That, my friends, was the amazing feature of this story that drew the attention of the crowds.

Jerusalem was probably packed with people from all over. I won't read the names again (!) but you get the idea of tremendous diversity with people coming from all walks of life

and all variety of cultures. I'm sure many had learned Greek as that was the common language of the area at the time, but their native languages were varied. Here we have a group of people who were natives to Galilee and Jerusalem, who probably only understood Greek and maybe some Hebrew, speaking for the first time in foreign languages. They didn't take a crash course in Celtic and Cyrenian and Cappadocian, they were simply filled with the Holy Spirit and given a very special gift in order to reach out to the masses in their home town.

Some people were amazed – others simply said they were drunk. I can picture an infectious-type joy that must have been expressed on the disciples' faces as they were bathed in the fire of Pentecost. I can picture laughter and singing and dancing in the spirit of pure joy. From an outsider's perspective, they very well could have appeared to be drunk. God probably thought of

that too, because this happened at nine o'clock in the morning.

Peter pointed out it would have been fairly impossible to be drunk so early in the morning. Peter boldly stood among the diverse crowd while I'm sure Roman soldiers were looking on.

Peter was given a special gift from the Holy Spirit as well – the gift of leadership. Peter began to issue his first sermon, and I can tell you from experience what an awesome feeling it is to be preaching in the midst of Pentecostal fire! I hope you are all still with me! The words were given to Peter – the scripture references came to the forefront. Peter was the willing vessel to be used by God to carry on the charge given by Jesus – to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Can you feel the Pentecostal fire today? I can tell you for certain that God is at work in this place. The Holy Spirit is with us today! But there are many things that can cloud our reception

to hearing God's word. Perhaps we are a little distracted with worries or concerns in our lives. I'm sure the disciples wrestled with the same things. How can we worship God when we don't even know where our next meal is coming from? How can we worship God when our physical bodies are failing? The beauty of Pentecostal fire is the ability for us to find a respite in difficult times. We are in one place and in one accord. The doors are shut and we are together in the presence of God. We can share one another's burdens, give our cares to the ultimate Caregiver, leave our pain at the foot of the cross and boldly take our next step together.

I truly believe we are in the midst of revival. I wrote this sermon earlier this week, but honestly I cannot say that I am the one who actually wrote it! There was a message that needed to be heard today. Are we ready to claim that Pentecostal fire for

ourselves? Are we ready to take this small and mighty body of Christ and minister to our friends and neighbors? Are we ready to support the ministries of this church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our talents? The gifts of the Holy Spirit are many – we are a diverse group with a diverse measure of spiritual gifts. Pentecostal fire is here in our midst and in our hearts. We are in the midst of revival. Let us keep our focus and our hearts in tune with the Almighty - the redeemer and sustainer of our faith. Let the church say ‘Amen.’