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May 14 & 15, 2016
First Lutheran Church of Aitkin, MN

1 Corinthians 12:1-13
(Acts 2:1-4): Pentecost

Children's Sermon

We have all been given gifts. If I do something on my own or use my gifts just by myself, it's kind of cool (rub hands, snap, clap, hands on thighs, stomp feet). That sounds kind of cool...

But if you all did it with me, I bet it would sound even better (do sequence again).

You know what, I bet if the whole congregation did it with us, I bet we can make something happen! I bet we can make it sound like a thunderstorm in here. (explain and do "make it rain" with whole congregation). Wasn't that cool??

Out of chaos, God brings wonder and excitement and activity is happening...

People gathered together, and God's spirit moves within and moves us and as it move us, we as a people become the body of Christ and church and as the church gets active and things happen...that's when you can hear it and it takes on a life of its own.

As we come together and move together as people just like we just did, God acts and works and the Spirit sends us out into the world. As we move we become the body of Christ.

It's hard to be the church without movement...without being sent...and when we are sent, the spirit is active and moving us and that is when we really get to see what God is up to.

Let's Pray!

Adult Sermon:

On the day of Pentecost (50 days after Christ's resurrection), many were gathered when God sent God's Holy Spirit to enter the world and motivate people to serve God and others. It was a community event that sparked the spread of Christianity worldwide.

I once taught a lesson on Pentecost to a group of teenagers and we looked at the story from Acts that we heard today. Their job was to listen to the story and think through what they heard and then mold it out of playdoh. They were quite the group of artists. We had a couple ears, some mouths and tongues, a wine glass, and a flame. As the conversation continued we attempted to put ourselves in the shoes of those who were gathered together in the house. It is almost hard to even imagine the scene that is set before us – the people are gathered together in a house when the violent wind comes upon them. As if that wasn't enough to get the people freaked out all of a sudden there are divided tongues as of fire appearing among them and on each of them. And just like that all the folks gathered are filled with the Holy Spirit.

So I asked this group of teenagers and their leaders what they would have thought or felt. Some of the adult leaders answered first and said things like, "I would be honored to be in the group gathered on that first Pentecost day" or "It may have been a little overwhelming" or even "It would have been interesting"

And then the teenagers answered...and if there is one thing that I love about teenagers it is that they tell it to you straight. These teenagers responded with honest and gut feelings. How would you have felt if you were there that day? "It would be freaky" and "I would be scared" and , the probably the best response was, "I wonder if it was like a zombie apocalypse." (that's my favorite answer).

I can't even begin to fathom what those gathered would have felt/seen/or even understood. The scene wasn't peaceful, the scene wasn't one in which people were able to sit by comfortably and enjoy all that was going on around them. Rather, gathered in the midst of community, the Holy Spirit comes in not merely like a gentle breeze or a warm summer wind coming off the lake, but the Holy Spirit shows up in a VIOLENT WIND. I think back to last summer where the wind blew through parts of Aitkin, Deerwood and Brainerd – and uprooted trees and created mass destruction and millions of dollars' worth of damage to buildings, trees, golf courses, and the surrounding area. There is nothing comfortable when we think of these types of winds.

So here we have the Holy Spirit showing up in this form, we have the Holy Spirit showing up in the midst of a gathered community. Unlike Moses' burning bush or Elijah's still, small voice, the event of the Pentecost didn't happen to a single person in an isolated spot. Pentecost happened when Jesus' followers were gathered together, and the miracle happened to all of them. A tongue of fire rested on each person gathered. They were given the gift of speaking in languages outside their own – clearly a gift intended to bless the masses, not just a select few. Since the creation of the world, humans were made to live and thrive in community, not

isolated and alone. At the same time, we were undoubtedly created with unique gifts. There are as many combinations of unique gifts as there are humans on the planet.

You over there...God has given you gifts! You on the other side...God has given you gifts. Those kids – including the noisy and cheeky ones – God has given them gifts too. These folk called elders, and these folk not called elders; God has given them gifts too. And me! ME! God has given me gifts. That is what it says in black and white: “he gives gifts to each one”. Baking. Cleaning. Comforting. Speaking. Giving. Encouraging. Listening. Sharing. Praying. Loving. Helping, forgiving, assisting are.

And one gift can do a lot...but many gifts all together in this community – we call ourselves the BODY of Christ...one church...one Holy Spirit...but all given different gifts – and these many gifts all together – they can change the Community. Heck – they can change the world.

Today we celebrate the birth of the church. We are celebrating the day that the Holy Spirit was given to US as a community. Where people are empowered to go out and live as the body of Christ. I find it very appropriate that the Holy Spirit shows up in the midst of a violent wind and tongues of fire. In the midst of the gathered community the Holy Spirit calls us to action and moves amongst us. While we often probably don't experience her as a violent wind, the Holy Spirit continues to move, breathe, work, and stir us to things in which the outside community steps back and wonders why we are doing what we are doing – steps back and wonders what has gotten into us.

I think about the ways in which the Holy Spirit continues to work in and through our congregation here at First Lutheran. The Holy Spirit calls us to open our church doors to feed people through the community meal, the food shelf, and even Wednesday night dinner worship. We feel the Holy Spirit is leading this church to grow these ministries. Might the Holy Spirit be at work right now in our midst to expand ways that we are feeding people? Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

The Holy Spirit calls us to be welcoming to all people. This is something that First Lutheran is really good at but might the Holy Spirit be working to expand what this entails? Perhaps by eliminating the age that one is able to receive Holy Communion, or offering an additional Sunday School opportunity for our children (4th – 6th graders)...even changing up what Sunday Morning Sunday School looks like a little bit to better reach busy families and lifestyles. This is where we feel the Spirit is leading us as a congregation! Come, Holy Spirit, come.

The Holy Spirit calls us to care for those in need. Again, something that this congregation does exceptionally well. This week, our community has been challenged and struck with the news of a teacher being arrested for being in a sexual relationship with a student. There are hurting families in our community...the student and the student's family and also the teacher and the teacher's family. How might the Holy Spirit be working in you or working in us as a body of Christ to reach out to those who are hurting or who have been hurt by this situation or reach

out to other people who are hurting in our community? Remember, that the Holy Spirit shows up in the midst of a violent wind and tongues of fire. Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

The Holy Spirit is alive and well and is working in the midst of this congregation, this community and in people across the globe. She is moving in quiet and humbling ways and in violent rushes of wind in our lives. The Holy Spirit continues to move as she did in the midst of those first group of people gathered in the house with tongues of fire and violent winds. She continues to inspire and call each of us to action.

May we dare to be open to the moving of the Holy Spirit, may we dare to give ourselves to the ways in which God continues to change the world, even if it is a bit frightening and scary. Come Holy Spirit come, move in the midst of our community, move us to action for your sake and for the sake of the world. Come, Holy Spirit come.

Amen.