

**LETTER TO KNOX CHURCH FAMILY**

**MAY 29, 2020**

Once again, I offer blessings to all of you, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord!

And, once again, I hope that you are staying well and being safe as we are dealing with the Covid19.

Who would have thought when we celebrated Christmas together that we would not be able to celebrate Easter, or Pentecost together in person? Who would have thought that, as we entered this new year, that we would be in this situation?

I'm thinking, at this point, that it will be September before we will meet again in person and when we do it may look quite different. I know I have said before that I miss meeting with all of you, but I do enjoy the drive-in church that is meeting at Living Word Church at 10:30 each Sunday. Last week Jason Cartier gave a wonderful sermon about staying true to God during this time and not letting sin get into our lives. The music is great as well. I encourage you to come out and try it!

Another video that came across my desk this week is called "The Blessing" [It is really neat to see all the churches across Canada participating.](#)

Please listen to it and again I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

<https://youtu.be/BSuwlEaQi54>

We are continuing to visit on Friday afternoons, so if you get a knock on your door we are there to have a short conversation and prayer with you.

Take and blessings to everyone!

Barb

\*\*If you have trouble opening the link try one of these options...

Highlight it and press control then click your mouse

Highlight it and copy and paste to a new internet page

Google search "The blessing Canada"

Sorry we had trouble finding a link to copy to the letter.

## **PREFACE**

*As we gather in praise and worship, even though we are not able to be together in our sanctuary, our focus this Pentecost Sunday is on the gifts that the Spirit gives for the building up of the body of Christ. We celebrate how God has blessed us through the service of so many people working in so many ways "to fulfil our calling as the people of God, the body of Christ." Pentecost is the third major feast day of the Christian Year (the others being Easter and Christmas) and is always reckoned as the "Birthday" of the Church. This is because it was on Pentecost that the Spirit was poured out upon all the believers, changing them from folk who hid in the upper room out of fear of the authorities to people who boldly proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ "starting in Jerusalem, and going to the ends of the world". The Spirit that was poured out, in accordance with the prophecy granted to the Prophet Joel, is the living presence of God with us and it is the Spirit that does those things to build up the body of Christ that we can't do on our own.*

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

(based on Psalm 139:7-10)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Where can I go to escape the Spirit of God?

Where can I run to flee from God's presence?

If I ascend to heaven, God is there.

If I make my bed in Hades, God is there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there God's hand will guide me, his right hand will hold me fast.

Blessed be the name of God, now and forever. *Amen*

## **OPENING PRAYER**

With many voices we praise You, O God. In different ways we serve You. As we assemble before You today, we pray that You would send Your Spirit upon us and that You would take our diversity and mould it into a common theme of thanksgiving. We pray that You would weave us and the gifts that we offer into a

whole cloth of service that will blanket the world with Your love. We thank You for Your true goodness and Your glory through Jesus Christ, our Living Lord. Dwell, we pray, within our hearts that we may bless You and bring everlasting praise to Your name.

We hold before You today O God those who need a special touch of Your Holy Spirit so that they may see the salvation You have planned for them. We hold before You in our hearts those who have no sense of Your glory or Your purpose. We remember those who live without hope or present help in their lives. We pray especially for this world as we are facing this terrible pandemic. We ask that You will protect us from this illness especially those who are alone and completely isolated. I think about the elderly in the retirement residences and nursing homes; for those people who have lost loved ones and who couldn't visit them in hospital and be with them when they passed. Continue to bless the medical workers and all the caregivers who are working very hard to look after the sick and the dying. And now, bless those who are particularly on our minds and in our hearts now as we continue to speak the words You have given us.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

*Amen*

## **When God Moves Through Us**

*Scripture: Acts 2:1-15, 22-24 , Acts 1:4-8*

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Last week, we celebrated the Ascension of Jesus, and today we celebrate Pentecost; the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is with us continually and particularly when we are in trouble. Have you ever been in a situation where God has given you that superhuman power and strength to get out of a situation? Well you might relate to this story.

A father was working on a vehicle in his garage. As he recalls, “I was on my back, face up, and I was trying to get some corroded brake lines when apparently the jack slipped and fell down on me.” He continued, “The minute the jack slipped, there was an almost instantaneous, real strong smell of gasoline, and then just, whoosh!” He recalls, “I thought they’d be pulling out a dead body later in the evening.” Fortunately, his 19-year-old daughter Charlotte was home and she heard the noise and came flying into the garage, barefoot, five foot six, all 120 pounds of her. She saw her Dad and still can’t fully explain what happened next. Charlotte recalls, “I lifted the truck,” she said “and finally managed to get Dad out. It took some crazy strength, pulling him out.” Once her Dad was out, she jumped into the truck, still on fire, threw it into four-wheel drive, and drove it, on three wheels, out of the garage. Then she closed the garage doors to help contain the fire, and got everybody out of the house, starting with her sister’s baby. “I just did what I had to do, so I don’t feel like a big hero or anything,” Charlotte said

Every so often we hear a story like Charlotte’s of superhuman strength in time of need. People do the seemingly impossible, and they have no idea how they accomplish it. What if a power like that was available to every Christian believer? It is! The Holy Spirit is our power source for when God wants to do the impossible through us.

It all began with a promise Jesus left his disciples right before he ascended back to heaven. Last week we looked at Acts 1 where we read what Jesus said before His ascension. *Acts chapter 1, verses 4-8:*

***On one occasion, while he was eating with them, [Jesus] gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized in water, but in a few days, you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. 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.”***

Today we separate what happened about 50 days after that first Passover, a holiday the ancient Jews called Pentecost. Instead of celebrating a harvest of crops, the early church would come to know this as a harvest of souls. Overnight, the church

would be born. Not a brick and mortar church, but a church of people who had trusted their lives to Christ. *The story is in Acts chapter 2:*

*1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.” 14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!*

*[Then he shares how all this is a fulfillment of what the prophet Joel had predicted long ago. Skipping down to verse 22...]*

*22 “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”*

I want to share today three observations of this original Pentecost experience. These three happenings are as true for us today as they were for the original disciples. Starting with,

### **1. THE POWER OF GOD COMES UPON US.**

Pentecost is all about the mysterious power of God. Verse 2 describes the “blowing of a violent wind” filling the house where these disciples were sitting. Imagine a tornado blowing through your house, on the inside! Power, potentially destructive power, humbling power. The Greek word for power here is “dunamos,” from which we get “dynamite!”

This is the kind of power undoubtedly experienced by the nation of Israel, when they were led in the wilderness by a pillar of smoke by day and fire by night. They saw smoke and experienced earthquakes from Mount Sinai as Moses met with God or the prophet Isaiah when he experienced a vision of angels singing, temple doorposts shaking as in a violent earthquake, and smoke filling the space around him. His only response to such a powerful God was to describe himself and his people as “unclean” (Isaiah 6).

I don’t know about you, but sometimes I take God for granted. I know He loves me, and nothing will ever stop that love. On the other hand, I forget that His ways are not my ways, His thoughts not my thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9), that He is so much higher and greater and grander and smarter and stronger than I am, that there is no real comparison between God and I. God is God...and I am not.

Pentecost is about recognizing the power of God. It’s about having your world shaken to the core, having your life turned upside down, and realizing God is God and you are not.

The early believers would know about myths and legends surrounding seemingly powerful gods. Remember the Greek and Roman gods you studied in school? They were powerful. They were even downright mean at times, messing around with human lives as if they were nothing. Yet, there is something different about this one true God. He is all powerful and yet, He is all loving as well. Notice that even

in the midst of all of this potentially destructive power, the spirit of God rests on us.

## **2. THE SPIRIT OF GOD RESTS GENTLY ON US.**

Did you catch that in the reading? There is the blowing of a violent wind, and then what seemed like tongues of fire. Both of those things would send my blood pressure sailing! I would be looking for exits out of the building, for fire alarms to pull, for my cell to put in a quick 911 call. I would be thinking, “Escape at all costs!” But notice what happens next. Those tongues of fire separate. They originate out of one source, which we will learn is the Holy Spirit, the very Spirit of God himself. And then they separate, and they come to “rest” on each of the believers (verse 3). What an interesting term! They don’t forcefully invade the believers, like some alien in a sci-fi movie. No, they come down to gently rest on each one. What a beautiful picture of the mercy of God! He, who is so much stronger than any of us, so much more powerful, so much wiser, so much more in control, this God of all that is created, lovingly comes to rest on His creation.

The Israelites in the desert discovered a God of power and glory and mystery on Mount Sinai, but they also discovered a God who wanted to personally communicate to them through Moses, to guide them and feed them, and bring them into a land full of milk and honey. Isaiah met a God who thought so highly of this one human being, that He sent an angel to touch him and make him righteous and holy (Isaiah 6:7). The people in the upper room at Pentecost found a powerful and mysterious God who came to rest gently on each one of them. And we find that same God, when we humble ourselves and wait for his presence.

Sometimes we think, “It would be a lot simpler to know God if I could have been in that upper room with a rushing wind and tongues of fire coming down to rest on my head!” That wouldn’t require so much faith. I want my own tornado and fire experience! But God doesn’t change as much from Bible times as we think he does. Maybe this same God works in much the same way today. Maybe, as the author of Hebrews says, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Maybe our problem is that we don't get quiet enough in the upper room to clearly hear from God. I know I have a lot of clutter in my own life. Busy, busy, busy. I think, "God, why don't you come in a louder way?" And God may answer, "I am, but you're not quiet or still enough to hear it!" Speak, Lord, your servant is hearing. Come, Holy Spirit, come. And then the third most amazing thing happens at Pentecost.

### **3. THE PRESENCE OF GOD ENABLES US.**

That's what the Holy Spirit is all about. This mysterious third person of the Trinity that is so hard to nail down, comes to enable us to do what we could never do on our own. Like the young woman in our opening story, He gives us superhuman strength just when we need it. Or sometimes it is superhuman boldness. Or maybe He gives us some mysterious command of new languages to connect with people in new ways, and spread the good news across cultures, across barriers.

The preaching notes from the United Methodist Church contemporizes these foreign language abilities. I quote, "When the Spirit comes, we can speak in languages that we didn't even know we knew. Instead of languages of hurt and anger and revenge, we are fluent in forgiveness and reconciliation. Instead of limitation and doubt and anxiety, we speak hope and joy. Instead of accusation and blame, love rolls off our tongues as though we were born to it, with a perfect accent as though it were a part of us.

Sure, there will always be doubters. Some in this Pentecost crowd jeered, "You've just had too much to drink!" But others, their lives were turned around forever. Peter preached with a newfound boldness. Yes, this same Peter who had denied even knowing Jesus just weeks before. Now he is a new person. And he cuts right to the chase. "Your sins put Jesus on the cross!" (Which is true for each of us as well, by the way.) And they say, "What can we do?" He tells them to turn away from their sin and receive the risen Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. And they do, as 3,000 people are added to the church that day! Happy birthday, church!

Are you ready for God to give you super-natural abilities? The right words when you need them? The right presence of love and forgiveness and truth when you need it? Pentecost is not reserved to the original 120 believers. It is for you and for



me. This same God still speaks, still moves like a tornado, still rests on us like tongues of fire, still fills us to do the impossible. Our part: to wait, to watch, to listen, to yield.

*Let us pray*

Holy God, please forgive us for putting You in a box, for thinking we have You all figured out. Please take away our complacency, our pride, our comfort, our selfishness, our self-centered living. Lord, help us to contemplate the assignment You have for us, along with the 120 that gathered that day: You want us to be witnesses of all that You have done in our lives. Help us to be ready to share, to be filled with Your Spirit and led by your Spirit. Help us each to identify the gifts You have given us; the abilities You have granted us to do Your work, and to help our brothers and sisters become stronger and better at being a light to the world. Help us to celebrate these gifts and to use them. Gracious Father, we thank you for the indwelling of your Holy Spirit. Help us to touch the power You have granted to us and to share it with others so that healing and wholeness may come upon all. We pray today O God for all those who labour in Your vineyard. Support them and bless them that they may endure to the end and see that which their hearts hold in hope this day. We thank you Lord for all the gifts that You have given to us and to your church as whole. **AMEN**

**BENEDICTION**

Go in peace; and may the Spirit of God be above you and below you.

May the Spirit be to the right of you and to the left; to the front and to the rear.

May the Spirit inhabit your hearts and your mind and move through your hands and your feet.

May the Spirit fill your eyes and grace your lips to the glory of God our Father and Jesus Christ, our Risen Saviour both now and forevermore. **Amen**