



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Pentecost (C) – Acts 2:1-21

Focus: *Turning the World Upside Down*

word of life

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17 NRSV)

Read Acts 2:1-21

God speaks the word and creation comes to be. That power-filled and transformative word of God continues in the Old Testament through the voice of prophets, such as Joel and is repeated by Peter in his first sermon after the resurrection of Jesus.

In Acts 2, Peter’s audience wrongly thinks the disciples of Jesus are drunk at nine o’clock in the morning. It appears to some of the Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem for the Festival of Pentecost that the disciples are babbling nonsense, until they hear words in their own language. How could this motley group of disciples have the ability to speak clearly in the native languages of the diverse population? Their words are beyond human comprehension, but at the same time understandable.

1. *What would it have been like to hear the disciples speaking so many languages on Pentecost?*
2. *What is your favorite part of the story told in Acts 2:1-21?*

Peter begins to preach—the one who denied Jesus three times and abandoned him at the crucifixion now has the courage to publicly proclaim God’s actions done through Jesus Christ. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit empowers Peter and the other disciples to move beyond fear and personal concerns to become vibrant witnesses to God’s actions in Jesus.

3. *How does Pentecost give Peter a second chance?*
4. *What does Peter do with this new opportunity to serve Christ?*

The sermon of Peter begins with the words of the prophet Joel, but moves to describe the fulfillment of Joel’s vision. God’s Spirit is unleashed in the world. Both sons and daughters shall speak God’s word—a life-giving word which has the power to transform. Those filled with the Spirit cannot help but proclaim God’s word.

Pentecost is a reminder of God’s creative ways to turn the world upside down and bring newness to our world as “...your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17 NRSV) The young are known for living today, dreaming of a future which may or may not be based in reality. Likewise, the old have had their opportunities to live out their dreams. Over time, dreams are often relinquished as people age and come to terms with reality.

5. *What does it mean for young men to see visions?*
6. *What might it have meant for the emerging first-century church to have old men dream dreams?*

With gusto, the Holy Spirit breathes new life. “Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:18 NRSV) God is not to be limited nor bound. Instead, there is something new happening through Jesus Christ. The world is being turned upside down and being placed right side up—all by the grace of God.

7. *What does Pentecost mean to you?*

Word among us

A young woman pastor decided to join a local hiking group for a hike on her day off. The group gathered in a parking lot and began their morning hike through a hilly forested park. The hikers were a wonderful mixture of veterans and new hikers. Friendly conversation floated along the trail as hikers got acquainted.

Eventually, someone asked the pastor what she did for a living. She replied, “I am a pastor.” Silence fell on the trail. A few hikers stopped to glare at the pastor. A woman turned to her and asked, “The Bible is clear women should not preach. Where in the Bible does it justify you to be a pastor?”

The pastor sighed inwardly. Although she had hoped to have a relaxing day off, she offered this reply, “Consider what God did on Pentecost. Peter stood up and proclaimed the prophet Joel’s words... “and your daughters shall prophesy”. God needs and wants all of us—old and young, male and female—to preach and teach! There is too much to be done to leave it to the men.”

1. *How would you have responded to the hiker’s question?*
2. *How do you justify youth being involved in worship and leadership of a church?*
3. *Do you believe God’s work in the world should be left to the clergy?*

Pentecost reminds us of the ways God turns the world upside down. The Spirit of Pentecost stirs up new possibilities, encouraging the use of our gifts in ways we never envisioned. We might as well put our excuses aside, for the Holy Spirit is breathing new life.

If you listen carefully to the reading of Acts 2:1-21, you can hear more than “the rush of a violent wind” (Acts 2:2) and words spoken in diverse languages. You can hear walls and barriers being blown down by the Holy Spirit. For God will not be limited by human constraints.

4. *What surprises you most about Acts 2:1-21?*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

How did Peter find the courage to preach to that hostile crowd gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost? By the grace of God! Peter had help when he preached that sermon. It is doubtful he had written down notes or a sermon before he opened his mouth. He might not have known he was going to have a chance to speak. But the Spirit filled him with both the courage and those words to speak.

When we visit the sick, console the grieving, listen to a friend, or counsel a family member, we may not know what to say. When we are at work, trying to put into practice our faith in daily life, we may not know how to respond. But the Holy Spirit can give us the wisdom and courage for the hour.

5. *When and how this week will you be turning to the Holy Spirit for guidance?*

Prayer

Mighty Spirit of God, stir us to be a bold and faithful witness to Jesus Christ. Amen.

last word

At the beginning of each day,
offer a prayer to be open to God’s Spirit.

Daily Faith Practices

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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