

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

*5Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."*

*14But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17'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. 18Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. 21Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'*

Have you ever dressed a moment of time in your imagination? A birthday, a Christmas, a vacation? As you journeyed toward the day did you see all the excitement and joy that would be yours when you arrived? In your mind were you opening the perfect gifts, hooking a fish to be mounted, experiencing a family together in love and at peace? And then you arrived at the moment to find that the finery you had clothed the moment in was only tattered rags?

I carry in my heart an image of what the church is all about- a people gathered, one spirit binding them together - no selfishness, no envy, no greed - no need to prove I am right by proving another wrong - every heart centered on God, every heart filled with the love of Jesus - never a wandering mind during prayer - never a discourteous thought or word or deed as the people are gathered together - never a holding back when the hungry can be fed, the naked clothed, the sick visited.

Trust - not just a word but a foundation for every word and deed - trust in God, trust in the spirit of God working in our neighbor.

This is how God's holy people are to be dressed, exactly as I imagine them, a people clothed in love.

On that day of Pentecost they were all together. God's spirit rushed out of heaven and into them. Soon they were telling of Jesus and of God's mighty deeds. Soon more and more were believing, soon Luke tells us they held everything in common, selling their possessions, sharing all they had with one another. They ate their food with glad and generous hearts. They praised God and had the good will of all the people. God's dream for them had come true.

Before long though, Ananias and Saphirra brought the money from the sale of their property to the disciples, but held some back. They lied. They wanted to look good, but they did not want to be good.

Soon there were conflicts between the disciples, complaints that some widows were being overlooked as food was distributed - trouble.

Just the way it is with us. I get an idea, I'm full of excitement, other people in the church don't like it. This one offers to help, that one ignores the offer.

When we came to this people we knew how things should be. But they just aren't.

I think of Kevin who is being baptized here today, all the dreams his parents may have for him. Odds are he won't be president, or win the Triple Crown in baseball. Chances are he will not win the Nobel Prize in chemistry.

But I'm sure he'll do something even better. He will be the person God created him to be. And you Wendy and Tom can help that happen by daily loving him and caring for him and telling him of the love of God in Jesus. Then God and Kevin will do the rest.

Back when the Spirit of God rushed down upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, they had no idea of what should be, could be, might be. They prayed, they waited, God acted.

What God did among them has seldom happened since. I know of no other moment when all language barriers were overcome and a people gathered to live a common life in joy and harmony.

Our expectations can be harmful. Our knowing so much about what God should be doing, or what we would look like or be like if we really believed, all of this keeps us from seeing what God is doing. For maybe just at the moment we are so disappointed with our sister

or brother in Christ, maybe at just that moment God has intended to show the power of forgiving - the wonder of being able to begin again - the joy of reconciliation.

Our congregation is entering a whole new world today. I don't know yet what it will be like as we elect a new council, as they structure our life in new ways.

Maybe God's Holy Spirit will surprise us. Pray the church will not be at all as we think the church should be. Pray the church will once more be God's new creation, as startling and as powerful as God's new creation on the day when the wind from heaven came down.

Pray for Pentecost today, in us.