



Sermon, May 23, 2021  
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Junction City United Methodist Church

Sermon Series: Parting Thoughts  
Pentecost Sunday  
**“The Reality of Spirit”**

**Scripture: Acts 2:1-21**

**2** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. **3** Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. **5** Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” **12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” **13** But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

**Peter Addresses the Crowd**

**14** But 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. **15** Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. **16** No, 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.  
**18** Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.  
**19** And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.  
**20** The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.  
**21** Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

## “The Reality of Spirit”

Breath – blow on your hand. What do you see? Yet nonetheless, we perceive it somehow, we see its effects.

- a. Wind- same effect
- b. Something invisible that has an effect upon us
- c. Ruach, pneuma, spirit
- d. Inspire, respire, expire, transpire, aspire

That which is Unseen yet is Real, and affects us, especially at the level of consciousness, thought, and will-based decision-making. But how can it be real if it cannot be perceived by 5 senses?

Plato used the allegory of the cave:

The allegory states that there exists prisoners chained together in a cave. Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners are people carrying puppets or other objects. This casts a shadow on the other side of the wall. The prisoners watch these shadows, believing them to be real.

Plato says, let us suppose that one prisoner becomes free. He finally sees the fire and realizes the shadows are fake. This prisoner could escape from the cave and discover there is a whole new world outside that they were previously unaware of.

This prisoner would understand that the outside world is so much more real than that in the cave. He would try to return to free the other prisoners. Upon his return, he is blinded because his eyes are not accustomed to actual sunlight. The chained prisoners would see this blindness and believe they will be harmed if they try to leave the cave.

Material realm, our ordinary, every-day physical existence, is a shadow of that which is truly real, the Idea(s) behind our perceived reality.

Early Christians recognized that what Plato described as the Good and Source of the Ideas, was what the Hebrew tradition called “God,” and the realm of the Ideal was the Realm of Heaven.

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Jesus taught that God was Spirit, therefore the ultimate and really real was spiritual in nature (which is why true worship is in spirit and truth).

Spiritual Reality is Ultimate Reality, and our progression as will-based creatures is from the shadows of this material reality into the light of the Spiritual Reality that is casting the shadows.

Because Ultimate Reality is spirit in nature, the only thing that can make us aware of and have access to that Ultimate Reality has to be spirit in nature as well – which is why Jesus promised the coming of the Spirit.

This Spirit is the Spirit of Truth: “When the **Spirit** of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” (John 6:13).

The Holy Spirit is not an emotional experience, nor was Pentecost. Pentecost was the coming of this Spirit of Truth, in which people discovered and experienced the Truth that there are no chosen people, there are no special people set aside by God, there are no races or castes or classes in the eyes of God. The Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, and all humans are one family. Pentecost was a power-filled experience when the people gathered there discovered that there was no need to fear one another, because they were, in reality, one flesh, one family, united and brought together finally by One Spiritual Parent.

Pentecost was a glimpse into this ultimate reality: our common humanity is designed by God, and is a spiritual reality, not the shadow of reality that we experience here with all our wars, our political posturing, scheming and striving after material wealth and gain.

The Holy Spirit, this Spirit of Truth, will declare to us the things that are to come. This is not foretelling the future of human history, but rather the path of our human spiritual destiny. Jesus taught this path, it's what we have been considering the past couple of years. The Holy Spirit continues the teaching that Jesus began, only nowadays we

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don't have to walk the dusty roads of Palestine to learn of the path. The Path comes to us.

The Holy Spirit is present with you and exists for you. It is present to you as a guide to the path. It is not a dispenser of special endowments or superhuman gifts. The charismatic and Pentecostal churches are mistaken in this, and misunderstand scripture. Jesus said nothing about people being selected or endowed with special gifts through the Spirit. The Spirit comes to lead us into the central truths that Jesus taught: that we are endowed by God with a spiritual aspect to our human nature that is eternal because it comes from the One who is eternal, and this binds us to all other human beings. As we seek to realize this spiritual aspect of our nature, we are drawn into loving service to others. Loving service is the manifestation of that spiritual reality within us. When you look at the world and realize that things aren't the way they should be, that is the Spirit arising within you. Whenever you volunteer in any group or organization to help others out or to work for justice, that is the Spirit arising within you. Whenever you seek to learn more about people in other parts of the world and recognize your common humanity with them, that is the Spirit arising within you.

And here is the point: in contrast to that common expression, if you are truly spiritually-minded, you will be nothing but earthly good. If you are truly spiritually-minded, you will do nothing but good here on earth. And that is the true Reality of Spirit.