

Pentecost Sunday 2017  
Baptism Sunday  
Scripture: Acts 2:1-18

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 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. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

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

*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. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:*

*'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.  
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.*

Will all that is going on today I thought I would keep my sermon simple. I thought it would be nice to write Ethan and Ali a letter on the day of their baptism to help them remember this day. It is a letter about the meaning of baptism and Pentecost. So instead of preaching, I am going to read my letter in the hope that it encourages all of us to remember who we are, why we are, and who we are with.

Dear Ethan and Ali,

Today I witnessed your baptism and I am filled with joy. I can still remember my baptism more than forty years ago and I pray that your baptism will be something you remember all the days of your life. Your baptism today is cause for all of us to pause and reflect on this powerful symbol of discipleship and rebirth. I want this letter to be a reminder of the love and support that surrounds you this day.

Just so you know, no one expects you to have this all figured out. There isn't anyone at FCCO that has all the answers. What we do have each other and a desire to follow Jesus. Baptism is one step on a life-long journey of loving others the way Jesus taught us to love. Your baptism is a powerful reminder of who you are, why you are, and who is with you.

We baptize by immersion because that is how John baptized Jesus. When Jesus was baptized, the Bible says that the spirit of God descended like a dove and a voice from heaven said, “This is my child, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” Today we affirm that you are a beloved child of God. No matter what, don’t forget this. This is who you are.

Jesus’ baptism marked the beginning of his ministry. Your baptism marks the beginning of your ministry as one who strives to follow Jesus. This means that by virtue of your baptism you are a minister of the gospel. You have a why, a purpose. It doesn’t matter if you are a student, a doctor, a plumber, or an artist – whatever you do for a living – wherever you go – you have a holy calling. You are called to work for justice, show compassion, build people up and treat each person you meet as a person of worth. You have an important role in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven. No act of love is ever wasted. There is more than enough love to share.

Your baptism is also a reminder that you are not alone in this work. You are part of the body of Christ, the church. Together, we continue what Jesus began. Each Sunday, as we gather around the table, we remember this. The table is a symbol of our unity. Everyone is at a different place on the journey. We are all working out our faith and it is different for every person. But all are welcome to the table to taste and see that God is good. And then we are all sent from the table to share God’s goodness with the world.

It is no coincidence that your baptism is on Pentecost Sunday. Today is the day we celebrate God breathing life and passion into the disciples. God took the Spirit that guided Jesus and poured it out on the church in spectacular fashion. If you read the story in the second chapter of Acts you see Jesus’ disciples are filled with the strength and courage to take the good news of God’s love to the ends of the earth. The story says the wind blew and the Holy Spirit came down like fire. People wondered what got into the disciples!

My hope and prayer is that people will wonder what has gotten into you. It would be great if people started to wonder what has gotten into all those people at FCCO! Because when the Spirit blows among us, and we work together, amazing things happen. The hungry are fed. The lost are found. The homeless are housed. The outcasts are welcomed. The broken are healed. Wars end. Peace prevails. This mighty spirit connects us and empowers us to be God’s healing love where there is brokenness.

The Apostle Paul says that God’s spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. It also produces; passion, courage, gratitude, and generosity. The Holy Spirit is our super power as we try to live as Jesus taught us to live.

I wish I could say it was easy. It’s not. Like all of us you will be tempted at one point in your life or another, to forget who you are and why you are. You will experience difficult things that make you question all of this. You will be overwhelmed by the evil and the brokenness of the world. Your message of love will be met with hostility and rejection. If, and when, any of this happens to you; remember your baptism. Remember who you are, why you are, and who is with you. This is the path to true greatness.

It is an honor and a privilege to share this path with you.

Pastor Dayna

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