

**June 8, 2025
Acts 2:1-21
Church of All Nations**

I came across a provocative quote recently – it over simplifies things but let me read it -

Christianity began in Palestine as a relationship with a person
Went to Greek soil and became a philosophy
Went to Roman soil and became an institution
Went to British soil and became a culture
Went to American soil and became an enterprise

The quote came with an urgent call to return to the origins of a relationship with Christ. And that is precisely the job of the Spirit – to take us to where Christ is, and to bring Christ to us. Pentecost is a day for mystics and spiritual adventurers. It is Pentecost Sunday so lets go Pentecostal!

Had cause to use the word Pentecostal far more over this year than any previous year. Good word, like evangelical, born again/above but words we near abandoned in the UCA. Reason I have uttered Pentecostal this year is talking about the Pentecostal group the Saints church using our building for regular Sunday evening worship.

One of the important things to say early on is that Pentecost is not the invention or the coming of the Spirit for the first time. The Spirit of God was active far earlier than these events we read of today. The Spirit is present and stirring at the time of creation, inspires the raging voice of the prophets thundering down the centuries calling for justice and God's reign to come. From the Psalms we read, "Where could I go to escape your spirit – from the depths of Sheol to the heights of heaven, there you already are." Same Spirit - as in "Holy". The scriptures speak of the Spirit as the presence of the resurrected Jesus, bringing to mind all he taught, empowering us as his disciples in the world. The Spirit comes alongside us and advocates for us, the Spirit fosters unity within the body of Christ, and at the same time bringing forgiveness and faith and strengthen of courage to the individual believer.

Today we heard references to the Spirit in both John and Acts - two differing presentations of the Spirit - what is your experience - discuss in groups

But we never control or possess the Spirit. Just because we call ourselves a church, and read from the bible and sing Christian songs is no guarantee we are being led by the Spirit. A few years ago when the latest Superman film was all the rage and a whole range of associated merchandise was launched onto the market, there was a very impressive Superman cape aimed at the kiddie end of the market. The manufacturer was obliged to add a disclaimer stamped upon the box that read, "Caution, Cape does not enable wearer to fly." Apparently some kiddies got so caught up in the spirit of the dressing up that they were launching themselves off the garage roof and plummeting to the ground with a sickening thud.

Simply talking of the Spirit, merely using the language or attending church, does not enable us to understand, own, or control the Spirit.

As I said in my earlier remarks the Spirit is around long before this event at Pentecost. As far back as when the wind/Spirit surged over the primeval waters of creation. The Spirit coming upon people is not a new thing. But perhaps what is new is that the Spirit is now given almost indiscriminately. Jesus was anointed with the Spirit. We get prophets anointed with the Spirit, like particular people in the Bible. The Spirit is a sign of their particular role or calling. But now we have the giving of the Spirit to everyone. Everyone gets the Spirit because everyone is engaged in the work of prophesying, seeing visions, witnessing to God.

Sometimes the Spirit comes with power to upend our otherwise ordered and nailed down lives. Sometimes to be open to the Spirit is to be propelled into places you can never imagine going. Sitting at table with people you never would choose to break bread with. Standing shoulder to shoulder with those who sound and look quite different to you. Truly God's Spirit is at times disruptive, inconvenient, exhilarating, confronting.

One of the most sobering things in the scriptures are those who witness the mighty acts of God like today when all these people are understanding people who could not speaking their language and their response is 'Ah, they are drunk'. Happened in front of them and they missed it! Could not read the signs, did not understand the movement of the Spirit.

I heard tell the story of Kodak recently. The Kodak company collapsed. From dominant to marginal, it fell. Kodak misunderstood what business it was in. Kodak was certain it was in the *film* business. And they knew how to make film. But in the end, film was only the medium. The real business was images.

Some of the earliest research and development of digital photography occurred at Kodak. Had Kodak understood itself as being in the image business, the story could have been different. But the new medium was not embraced. The corporate executives looked to what they knew. The board were not interested. Or not capable of seeing. And the rest is history

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles the Spirit empowers a community to break through the massive social barriers of their day. Which is not to say they find it easy; there were certainly some almighty disagreements; but the Spirit led the emerging Christian community and they spread, the Lord added to their numbers even as they were being imprisoned and executed for refusing to keep quiet about what the Spirit was saying.

We don't have any idea what the Spirit will do next, so let's not pretend that we do, or try to limit our assumptions about what the Spirit might do. The one thing we know for sure is that the Spirit is bringing us toward new creation, so whatever it is, it's going to be good

Maybe we could reclaim the word Pentecostal for all Orthodox Christians. The focus shouldn't be on our conviction about Spiritual gifts, but about the Holy Spirit filling

believers for the work of the gospel. That's my hope too. I hope we would all come away marveling at the power of God and being more motivated to help carry out the Great Commission.