

On Pentecost Sunday the Spirit filled our church with sound and flame! Kate preached a sermon that many people asked for a copy of, and so we decided to offer it to all of you. It is based on the readings from Acts 2:1--22 and John 7:37 --22 and John 7:37--39, and it is entitled “

Thirsting for the Spirit

Jesus cried out “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let anyone who believes in me, drink.

As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”

Okay, folks, on this day of Pentecost, I tell you I am thirsty! As the Spirit is roaring in to the disciples in power, startling them into bold witness, waking them into pulsating life, and weaving them into a just and vibrant community, I thirst. I thirst for that kind of transformation right here, right now, in my life and in the church. In this church. I thirst for more than a luke-warm Christianity and a part-time spirituality that allow us to accept the status quo as the way life is and continue to recite our prayers, doing lip-service to a faith that is supposed to set us on fire!

The tongues of flame setting upon the disciples today are meant to be our tongues of flame, claiming us as sons and daughters of God, bearers of the supreme love that infuses the earth with harmony, peace, joy and justice. I thirst for the day when I, when we, fully inhabit that identity, a daughter of the Most Holy, a son of the Creator Spirit, a family of God, here on this earth at this moment in time to bless it with divine life.

We hear Jesus say this morning, “When you are thirsty, come to me and drink, and let everyone who believes in me, drink.” But what does that mean? Come to Jesus, believe, and drink? I think this is

where I, and where much of the church, have gotten stuck, and at times have been thrown off the course of Spirit. It is in that word "believe." Now, don't get me wrong. .it is a good word. But it has various meanings, and I'm afraid we've become paralyzed by one. An example. .let me say that I believe the earth is round. It is an intellectual assent. So, even though I cannot really see it, people have told me, and I believe it is true. Now, this kind of belief doesn't ask anything of me. It is sorted away in my brain, and does not demand any kind of response. It does not put me in any kind of real relationship with the earth. Sadly, the church has often emphasized in its history this type of belief. Believe in Jesus. Accept that he is the Son of God. If you believe, then you will be saved.

But, the gospel understanding of "believe" is more demanding than that. We cannot believe in a person and file it away in our brain. If I say to you, "I believe in you," it conveys trust, it conveys admiration, it says that you are someone that has the power to influence, change, inspire my life, and I am going to let you. To believe in someone is to place oneself in a vulnerable and transforming relationship to that person. I believe in Joel, and because I do, it has altered and formed my life in numerous ways, and will continue to. To believe in another person changes us, and commits us to that change.

Jesus cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let anyone who believes in me, drink!" Belief in Jesus is to drink him in. To trust and to be vulnerable to his living spirit in such a way that it flows through our veins, refreshes our bones and muscles, and revives our soul. To drink in Christ's spirit is to allow ourselves to be changed from

the inside out. As Jesus himself says, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water."

So, tell me, what is flowing out of you right now? Is it the living water of Christ, the stream of divine life and joy that brings healing, comfort, and challenge wherever it is directed? Or is it a stream of fear, anxiety, apathy, envy, despair? Perhaps there is no stream at all. .you can barely manage a trickle of life. It does not have to be. Perhaps we've been drinking from the wrong sources. For we are meant become a flowing source of the stream of Christ's spirit in the world! In fact, as a faith community together, it is possible to become a raging river, the kind that has the power to change a whole landscape, carving new directions, flooding fallow fields, and moving the earth toward love and justice. The tiny band of disciples that felt the Spirit's power today literally changed the face of the earth, reaching out even over time, so that millennia later we still drink from their springs

This will not happen if we simply train our minds to believe in Jesus. It can only happen if we trust, if we become vulnerable, if we assent with our whole hearts to chew on, swallow, and digest the living Word, the teachings, the way of life, the compassionate being the one who is God incarnate, until the spirit of Christ inhabits us, lives within us. For then we can live our true identities as sons and daughters of God.

Okay, now in my mind, I am hearing the voice of my dear friend Julie, who after many a sermon in Wisconsin would come up to me and say, "Yes, yes, yes! But how do I do that?" I confess, I am not always the most practical of preachers. But this time, I

am going to make some suggestions. First, get honest. Ask yourself, what is the nature of your belief in Christ? Is it a vulnerable relationship of trust that is persistently comforting, challenging, and changing you? Or is it primarily an intellectual assent? And if indeed you are struggling even with intellectual assent, let it go. Instead, enter a relationship!

My next suggestion – find someone who is alive! Who streams with living water! Whose presence draws you in. I met someone like that just the other day. I don't know if he is Christian, or Buddhist, Rastafarian, or none of the above, what I do know is he had the fire of life in his eyes. He could have been anywhere from 70 years old on up, I have no idea. He came to our Ministerium meeting with a plan to alleviate regional, inter-generational poverty. It's an intriguing plan, and you may hear more about it in the future. But for now, let me tell you that his engagement with life, his awareness that he had a part of play in it, his compassion, lit him up. I was immediately drawn to him. When you find your person who is steaming with living water, bathe in it. Talk to them. Get to know what fills them up. Ask questions. Open your heart. You need not do just what they are doing, but explore the source of their stream. Let yourself feel its power. Dare to meet and get to know the Spirit in the life of another.

And then. .pray, pray, pray! Set aside a time, every day, for prayer. Do not fill the time with words. But listen. Invite the Spirit in and just listen. Sit with your own longing, your own thirst for life, and listen. In time, you will begin to hear the waters flowing, the Spirit moving, in the deepest part of yourself where God lives.

*We cannot stream with living water until we
have tapped its source. The Spirit alive in Jesus
Christ, the spirit alive in the gentleman working on
poverty, the spirit alive wherever compassion is coupled with joy,
this spirit lives deep inside each of us.*

*If we cannot find it, it is time to remove the sludge, to
clear a path, to make our way back to God, to the divine origin of
the living water in our lives and in the
life of our church.*

*On this day of Pentecost, I thirst for that living
water. I long for the raging river that is the spiritinhabited church,
forging new directions and ways of
life among us. Come, Holy Spirit, come. Fill us,
flood us, soak us in your irrepressible life that we
might refresh, renew, and restore the face of the earth.*

Amen.

**THIRST FOR THE DAY
WHEN I,
WHEN WE,
FULLY INHABIT THAT IDENTITY,
A DAUGHTER
OF THE MOST HOLY,
A SON
OF THE CREATOR SPIRIT,
A FAMILY OF GOD,
HERE ON THIS EARTH
AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME
TO BLESS IT
WITH DIVINE LIFE.**