

### **Jeff's reflection: "Come, Holy Spirit."**

Today is Pentecost Sunday – it's the Sunday when we read 'that' passage from Acts:

-the one with all the unfamiliar and multi-syllabic place names – like Mesopotamia, Pamphylia, Cappadocia, as well as Egypt, Libya, Judea and other places

-the one with the great special effects, the tongues of fire appearing above the heads of Jesus' disciples, the sound of a gale force wind blowing through the room and everyone receiving instant translations of what the disciples say, so that everyone hears the disciples' words in his or her own language!

-the one where the people from all the places with all those neat names, say that Jesus' disciples are acting like they have just left a pub after consuming way too much alcohol!

Today we read 'that' passage, that odd Pentecost story.

It is an ODD story...

It is an odd story because it wants to awaken us to the odd story of God. I think it wants to awaken us to the alternate story of God. I think it wants to startle us out of our tendency to understand the world only by what we can see, measure and manage; it wants to startle us out of our tendency to accept that the world must operate the way it operates, with the wealthiest 10% possessing nearly 50% of the total wealth. It wants to startle us out of seeing the world through only the stories of statistics, memos and news reports.

Pentecost wants us to remember we belong to another story, a different narrative.

It is like going into a movie theatre to see the movie 'The Sound of Music' and then sitting down and having the movie 'Rambo' play on the screen. We are watching the wrong movie.

In this story of Acts, this story of the not-drunk on wine disciples, anyone watching the movie of Roman imperialism, or watching the movie of extensive poverty, or watching the movie about a Jesus who has once and for all been dealt with on cross – is watching the wrong movie.

God is running a different movie. God is telling a different story. God is giving us a different narrative by which to live in this world.

In this Pentecost story, Peter becomes God's story-teller. Peter tells them that God's story is one they already know, because it is as old as creation.

Peter quotes from one of the prophets who had given poetic voice to this story, the prophet Joel:

Peter quotes Joel to say this is a story about the last days – the last days, the end days – sometimes Christianity has said that the last days mean the end of this world, means Jesus coming back to rule over a few people after all the ones who didn't make God's grade have been killed and eliminated.

That's not what last days are – last days are the days when you get ready for the next days – the last days of summer are when you prepare for return to school. Last days of training camp are when you prepare for the season. Last days of fall are when the crops are harvested and all is made ready for winter.

Last days are when the world changes to become a little more like intended it to be – last days for racism, last days for poverty, last days for solving differences through war and violence.

Because...because...in the last days people are entering God's narrative. In the last days God's Spirit is poured out...like water into a baptism font, or like a water cooler dumped onto a winning coach...

In those last days your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...the young people, the people who have decades of life ahead of them and do not want a world shuddering under the impacts of climate change following a history of disrespect for creation

- the young people whose friends look different than they do, and who use different pronouns to define themselves and who they love as friends

- the young people who don't want to live under the shadows cast by stockpiles of nuclear weapons

-the young people who want to be part of a different movie than the one that has been running through the theatres of power in this world...these young people shall prophesy – they will dance in the spirit of the prophets, prophets who were attuned to God in this world, who paid attention to the alternative story, who sang of the world as it should be when it is God's world – a world in which the hungry are fed, you live with compassion for all, everyone is God's beloved, creation is God's art work, and we study the ways of peace.

In the last days, says Peter, your young people shall see visions and your old shall dream dreams. The young shall envision a new, more compassionate future, a more compassionate present, and the old will dream – dream of the dreams they once held, dreams of growing old with dignity and in peace.

In those days the Spirit will pour out and people will prophesy – even slaves, men and women – those enslaved by poverty, by racial prejudice and profiling, by fear of affirming their gender identity, by bullying, those enslaved by despair and desperation.

Those without place, power or prestige will prophecy, they will proclaim God's spirit with them, proclaim their identity as children of God and call for a world of just and right relations.

The last days are the days when we change the reel and begin to watch a new movie, the movie of God's ongoing creation, the movie of resurrection life, the movie when everything changes,

On Pentecost the Spirit of God is heard across all the divisions and borders and nationalities, and God will once again be discovered moving in history, writing the story of humanity.

We will once again discover God in the goodness of creation, in slaves freed from slavery, in food shared with the poor and the vulnerable and the ones different from ourselves.

This Pentecost comes upon us while we are still in the midst of a pandemic; comes at this time to open us to God's spirit inviting us into the new world in which we affirm our shared humanity, that we are all of one human race, with many gifts and experiences to share and honour;

inviting us into a new world in which young and old and everyone in between can live with dignity and safety;

-a new world in which our weapons of violence are melted down and recast as musical instruments and as farm implements

-a new world in which we mid-wife this earth rather than pollute and exploit it

-a new world in which trusting in God means practicing an equitable sharing of food and wealth, practicing forgiveness and gratitude, practicing healing and reconciliation.

This Pentecost let us receive the Spirit of God, the spirit given in the spirit of the resurrected Christ, and let us reclaim the story of God's love loose in this world, let us enter the ever-new narrative of God filling us with new life, the new life embodied in Jesus, now embodied in us. The life of God's love present in our lives and in this world.

Come Holy Spirit...and thanks be to God. AMEN

**For reflection:**

What do you think about the definition of 'last days' presented in this sermon?

Where do you see or where do you experience God's Spirit acting in the world today?

This sermon lists some ways in which the world and people's actions and attitudes need to change. Can you name some other changes you think God desires?

