

Sermon Transcript

Moving Forward With the Holy Spirit

**Acts 2:1-21 and Luke 24:48-49 | Pentecost Sunday | May 19, 2024 | John Klawiter,
preaching**

Grace and peace to you my friends in faith,

Has anything so exciting ever happened in church that you would've assumed everyone was drunk?

At 9 in the morning?

It's the only logical explanation that could be made during the mass confusion of the Pentecost moment that is at the beginning of the Book of Acts.

Pentecost, a Jewish festival called Shavuot, happened 50 days after the harvest is celebrated during Passover. It was a first fruits harvest that would have brought visitors to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. (SLIDE of Shavuot)

The festival was connected to the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

It was a big deal.

Yet, when visiting the Holy City, I can't imagine that any of the travelers that day would have anticipated what happened next (map of travelers). Look at how far those pilgrimages would have been?

Parthians from the east and visitors from Rome. Language, culture, customs... all different and unique to the group who arrives in Jerusalem.

They're all about to witness an event that they'll bring home with them—and you already can envision the spreading of the good news through conversations along the roads on their way.

The disciples, who were still in shock from the Ascension of Jesus 10 days ago, were waiting on his important instructions.

The verse from Luke 24 will be our theme for the summer:

48 You are witnesses of these things. **49** And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Witnesses to WHAT things?

Well, the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus for one.

But Jesus also opened up the scriptures about him being a fulfillment of the law of Moses.

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And so, wait a moment, why are all the travelers coming to town? To celebrate the law of Moses.

Jesus will have a surprise waiting for everyone 10 days later.

And so, the moment becomes a NEW Pentecost—when the Holy Spirit arrives and the leaders of the church have the confidence to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

I love the comment from the crowd that, in the midst of confusion, everyone must be drunk. How chaotic and surreal it must have been for Jews from all over world to not only understand one another, BUT, then to hear the story that Paul is to share with them. We have the benefit of the full story written down, but what it must have felt like in the middle of this had to be unsettling.

Author Margaret Atwood writes:

When you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion; a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it.

It's only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself or to someone else.

We are grateful that Luke, the writer of the gospel, continued to tell the story in the book of Acts and we see how this event plays out.

We get to see how the unsettling and powerful nature of the Holy Spirit—which arrives like a violent wind—is actually the same Spirit that guides us today.

I have not witnessed y'all in such a stupor that I would presume everyone to be drunk.

But I have seen this mission statement of Faith's to be a true statement of our shared intent.

Led by the Spirit to Share God's Grace

When a call goes out to share, Faith responds.

Candles to help the unsheltered. Snacks or food to feed children or the community.
Plants to grow to feed our neighbor. Creating artwork to express our faith.

We encourage an interactive faith—one that witnesses authentic prayer on the football field or that can find God's presence in the wilderness of the Boundary Waters (slide of group).

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Three of our graduating seniors were on this trip a few years ago, including Vanessa (slide of her in the mud), who had the good fortune of falling backwards in the mud of Bottle Portage.

Of course, you may recognize Vanessa better for her help in getting the Word on the Street (SLIDE).

Their confirmation group had one of the most unique confirmation experiences through Covid—yet this trip was awesome because everyone was part of the bubble.

There were flickers of hope that things could be normal again. Because we were a bubble, each group that went in the summer of 2021 didn't need masks.

The words of Margaret Atwood are interesting as we reflect on Covid-time. In the middle of the story, it's only confusion and darkness. It felt like we were ALWAYS in the mud.

Yet, afterward, we write the story by the way we tell it.

It's time for faith to spend this summer reflecting on the past in order to look to the future.

We will read through the book of Acts a few verses or a story at a time (ACTS image).

The lens will be our formula for the message each week.

First, we'll look at the past—what challenges did the new believers go through? (CLICK on WHAT?)

Then, we'll ask "So what?" Why does it matter what they did? How did the decisions made affect the direction of the early Christian church? (SO WHAT?)

Finally, we'll reflect on the what's next. Now what? Not just for the early church—but for us? What is the future at Faith all about? (NOW WHAT?)

Today, we are not in darkness or confusion. We are about to make decisions while in a good place. It's the best time to be thoughtful. As a congregation we have given space for the Holy Spirit to answer a lot of questions about where we want to go.

We have a congregational meeting to approve an updated constitution—which is no small feat to coordinate and synthesize the changes to be in good governance.

We are voting on an organ repair that makes sense and will improve the sound of pedals.

And we are voting on whether to install solar panels that would provide financial benefits for the next generation.

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So what?

Like the challenges and fears from Covid, we emerged. This congregation supported each other and always had a long-term approach. Decisions weren't rushed and thoughtfulness was applied.

Today isn't a decision day that has been rushed. When it wasn't clear on the best solution for the organ, we delayed the vote to have the best information possible. We now have that and the cheapest bid is also the best bid to accomplish what we need to do.

The work for all three of the things we are voting on has been in motion for almost a year, if not longer. We don't know what the future holds, but given the information we have and the processes we've followed, each of the three items could impact the next generation at Faith.

We also say congratulations to our graduates who will go on to new adventures. Some involving school, work, travel.

We don't know what they will become. Yet, we are filled with hope. What an inspirational group of young leaders. They aren't the future of the church. They have been the church. They ARE the church. They've taught us... and will continue to grow as leaders. Thanks be to God for our youth and young adults.

We are the church and the story is continuing to unfold. Whatever decisions we make, through our prayerful and thoughtfulness, are not done alone.

The Holy Spirit is with us. Leading us forward... to share God's grace. Amen.