

Come Holy Spirit, Come
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Seattle First Baptist Church

Acts 2:1-8; 12-18 (NRSV)

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.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God! On this Pentecost Sunday, I would like to tag this message, Come Holy Spirit, Come.

There was a wonderful saint at Mount Zion named Mother Mable Harris who greatly influenced my life while growing up. She was a devout woman of God who felt called to ministry, but since women were discouraged from accepting their call to ministry during

most of her lifetime, she served God and lived out her faith as an exemplary laywoman.

As you know, in many Black churches during worship we talk back to the preacher, the choir, the ushers, and anyone else who is involved in worship. Mother Mable would always say, ***Come Holy Spirit, Come Holy Spirit***. I thought it an odd phrase, since we were already in church and we believed that God was already there. But actually, this very short prayer invited the Holy Spirit to come, instruct, and reside in the hearts of the worshipers. That brief petition mostly uttered during the prayer, or after the choir finished singing, or during the sermon, got my attention every Sunday. Certainly, that prayer would be appropriate today on Pentecost Sunday. Come Holy Spirit, Come.

In Acts 2, Jesus' disciples, as well as other devout Jews, were in Jerusalem to celebrate ***their*** Pentecost which happened 50 days after **Passover**. The Jewish Pentecost also known as the Celebration of Weeks, celebrated the receiving of Torah and it called for devout men (actually men at that point) to observe this sacred day in Jerusalem. So, Jews from all over the diaspora, who of course spoke many languages, would have been in Jerusalem for this Jewish Pentecost celebration.

We are told Jesus' disciples were all in one place, or one room, when suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. All biblical translations are clear that this cacophony came from heaven. This was not a human contrived or controlled event and the disciples had not plan it.

The Spirit came into their space. She didn't ask permission to enter, and the Spirit touched every single person there. This was not an occasion where some felt something, and others did not. Nor, was this an event where some spoke in unknown languages and others did not. On this first Pentecost after the resurrection, the Spirit

landed noisily on everybody. New Testament scholar, Robert W. Walls wrote, in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit is a communal gift, not a personal one. It touched everybody!

Now when we worship, we definitely like to be in charge of what is going to happen. We are not that into surprises when we get together. For the most part, we want to be out of here in about an hour. On first Sundays, we are OK with worship going an hour and 15 minutes. But, our tendency is to program everything that is going to happen. Well, sometimes we are not in charge--even though we may be leading worship. I was part of a congregation that regularly put in the bulletin, these services are under the direction of the Holy Spirit and subject to change. In other words, don't get attached to what is on the paper.

The scripture also says that during this first Pentecost for the disciples the Spirit was loud—really loud! The followers of Jesus were so loud that a crowd of looky-loos gathered around them because of the commotion. Now, I know for many of us this kind of divine activity makes no sense. It can be scary when we are not in charge. Loud noises make us uncomfortable, unless we are cheering for our favorite sports team. So, we would rather not have too much Spirit around.

But our text says, that others were drawn to the noise of the Spirit. They were drawn to what was going on in that room. The curious wanted to know, what is this? Worshiping quietly is one way to experience God's presence and I like reflective, contemplative worship—occasionally. But when I worship, I'm looking for a Holy Ghost party! That is part of my tradition, I'm just saying. I want to have just as good a time at church as I had at Key Arena on Friday night with Paul Simon.

People are drawn to the noise of the Spirit. Psalm 150 says it best,
Praise the Lord. Praise God in the sanctuary; Praise God with trumpet sound; with lute and harp; with tambourine and dance; with strings and pipe; with clanging cymbals;

with loud clashing cymbals; Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Jeremiah said when he tried to shut down the word of God in his spirit, it was like a burning fire shut up in his bones; and he got weary when holding it in. Paul said to the church at Thessalonica, do not quench the Spirit. There is power in the Spirit to change lives, to heal wounds, and to lift up the downtrodden and the discouraged, so Come Holy Spirit, Come.

An old Baptist hymn said it this way:

Come Holy Spirit heavenly dove
With all thy quickening power
Kindle a flame of sacred love
in these cold hearts of ours

When the Spirit is in charge, proclamation is central. Everyone at this first Pentecost heard the gospel in their own language. Remember there were devout people in Jerusalem from many countries. Some of the pretentious, gathered people had problems understanding how this could be. Are these not Galileans? Galileans were not known for their linguistic abilities. Obviously, their nouns and verbs didn't always agree. So, the naysayers tried to dismiss the Divine experience by saying these people are too uneducated to know how to speak our language.

Sadly, dismissive language is not a thing of the past. You've heard disparaging words or perhaps even said unkind things about people in our community—those from south Seattle, White Center, South Park, or Skyway. They are not like us. They don't understand our ways, speak our language, or sing our songs. They are not like us. Are not these Galileans?

Another group tried to dismiss the Divine moment by saying they are drunk and therefore making all this noise. No, they weren't drunk. It was only 9 o'clock in the morning. I realize a few mimosas could get one a bit tipsy even at 9 AM, but this comment was made to minimize the importance of the sacred moment. Sometimes we are too quick to dismiss that which we don't understand. All wisdom does not reside in the social elite. God, does not have to ask our permission to do a new thing! If we are unwilling to get in the flow of the Spirit, it is best for us to get out of the way and let God bless someone else. Come Holy Spirit, Come!

Peter stood up and said these people are not drunk. What you are experiencing is the power of the Holy Spirit! Remember your scriptures. The prophet Joel said that in the last days, God said, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh—not just the flesh of the deserving, or the chosen, or the educated, or the forgiven, or the able bodied, but upon all flesh says the Lord.

When the power of the Spirit comes upon God's people it will be upon men and women. Women will prophesy, just like the men.

When the power of the Spirit comes upon God's people all divisions between young and old will be erased. Young people will see possibilities yet unimagined. Old people will share dreams of a new and better day.

When the power of the Spirit falls upon God's people, economic and social divisions will be a thing of the past. There will be no haves and have nots—no servants and masters—no slaves and free people.

When the power of the Spirit come upon all God's people, God's shalom will be known and experienced. Everyone will have what they need to live in harmony and with dignity. There will be enough housing to get rid of tents in parks, and cardboard lean-to's from under freeways and car campers on city streets.

When the power of the Spirit comes upon all people there will be healthcare for everyone and mental illness will be treated as a medical condition and understood by law enforcement.

When the power of the Spirit comes upon all God's people, no one will go to bed hungry while others throw out mountains of food in landfills and yard waste bins.

When the power of the Spirit comes upon all people the prison industrial complex will cease and free prison labor for corporations will be a thing of the past.

When the power of the Spirit comes upon all God's people, justice will roll down like water and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream.

When the power of the Spirit comes upon all God's people, we will have no need for pistols and assault rifles. We will exchange instruments of war for instruments of peace and love.

When we get a glimpse of the power of the Holy Spirit and allow ourselves to be washed in the flow of the Spirit, we too will say Come Holy Spirit, Come.

Come like tongues of fire. Fill us with your power, your presence, and your passion.

We have yet to imagine what the people of God will be and what we can do, once we are on fire with God's spirit.

Come Holy Spirit, Come!