

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

June 9, 2019
Pentecost, Year C

The readings this week:

- Acts 2:1-21 ◦ Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
- Romans 8:14-17 ◦ John 14:8-17, (25-27)

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Kindle

There's an art to kindling a fire. Ask almost anyone who has been charged with lighting an Easter Vigil or Easter Sunrise fire. You can't just wish a fire into existence. A proper fire takes planning, resourcefulness, and a pinch of luck. Oh, and it also takes a spark.

When she was a teenager, my oldest daughter learned how to light a fire in the backcountry using a bow-drill. It was a fascinating thing to watch her use simple tools made from wood, cord, and stone to ignite a fire. It took some doing, but it wasn't too long before she became quite accomplished at sparking fresh fire with an ancient method.

This Sunday we celebrate Pentecost. We hear the story of the early disciples gathered in Jerusalem, and God's kindling of Spirit fire in their lives. What we are left with in scripture is a concise yet powerful description of an experience that defied all logic and rational explanation. It was controversial, it was miraculous; it was the spark of what Jesus had promised and tried to communicate in this week's gospel reading. No wonder they didn't get it; this was so much more and so very different than business as usual in synagogue or marketplace. This was not what they had in mind for their struggling, fledgling movement.

Folks simply did not know what to make of it. Everyone came running and heard the story told in their own language. Imagine yourself in a large international terminal where the sounds of many tongues rise and fall in discordant waves yet with clear understanding. Now add to that this whole "divided tongues, as of fire" image and the rush of a violent wind. What a way to usher in the advent of the Advocate!

Of course, the naysayers chalk up the action to drunkenness. Peter counters that this event is the fulfillment of prophecy of Joel's prophecy:

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 (Acts 2:17-18).

Whatever it was, and however God made it happen, Pentecost was the continuation of something big. It was old and new, ancient and contemporary, timeless and true. And we are part of the same movement, the continuing narrative, heirs of the same family of God. The question, dear friends, is how are we to be that same spirited, innovative, bold Pentecost church for this day, our time, and in whatever particular context we find ourselves planted? Will our people dream dreams of mission? Will our men and women see a new vision for what our life together can be? Will our children prophesy in the face of empire and sing a new song?

Yes, there is an art to kindling a fire. Thankfully for us, the Spirit's in charge of the art part of the equation, of blowing the nurturing and saving wind that fans the flames. You and I need only to show up, pick up the ancient tools, assemble fresh materials and resources available to us, and trust the Spirit to spark holy fire today and every day. The results may not look like what you so carefully plan and envision, but that's part of the beauty of church. We are the living, breathing, walking-around expressions of the One who promises us peace and abundant life.

~ Sharron R Blezard, [Stewardship of Life](#)



Reflecting on the Word



___ 1st Reading: [Acts 2:1-21](#)

As you reflect on this story of the birth of the church, how much does it relate to the life of your church today? What are the "languages" that may divide your church, or at least make unity more difficult to achieve? What are the challenges the Spirit presents to us in our own day? What amazing but confounding things is God doing in the life of your church, your community, this nation, and the world? Do we feel like we are "new wine"? [Weekly Seeds](#)

___ Psalm Reading: [Psalm 104:24-34, 35b](#)

Verses 27-30 form sort of a lesson from the previous verses. What is this lesson and what does it say about God? Verses 31-35 are a worshipful response to all that the Psalmist has seen. Does creation stir you to such praise? What dimension of creation does this the most for you? v.31 "Let the Lord rejoice in his works." Or in the Message "Let God enjoy his creation!" How do we prevent God being able to enjoy his creation? How can we enable creation to be something God rejoices in? In an era where biodiversity is under great threat, what hope does this Psalm give us? Where should our trust lie? What if anything does v.35 tell us about the place of humanity? Is there anywhere else in this Psalm that talks about disharmony or conflict within nature? In a consumer culture which often fails to value nature, how can we restore the balance that this Psalm pictures? [Stony Point Church, At Your Service Creation Care](#)



Effortlessly,

Love flows from God into man,
Like a bird
Who rivers the air
Without moving her wings.
Thus we move in His world,
One in body and soul,
Though outwardly separate in form.
As the Source strikes the note,
Humanity sings--
The Holy Spirit is our harpist,
And all strings
Which are touched in Love
Must sound.



- Mechtild of Magdeburg 1207-1297
trans. Jane Hirshfield
via Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

___ 3rd Reading: [Romans 8:14-17](#)

What is "the spirit of slavery?" Why does having this spirit cause a person to "fall back into fear," and to what "fear" is Paul referring? How is a believer's life different from this? What do you learn about being adopted as God's son/child in these passages? In what way do these truths bring you comfort? Strength? Joy? Besides revealing God's being to us as endless and continuously new love, the Spirit bears witness within each of our spirits. How do you think your prayers of thanksgiving, petition and worship are changed when the Spirit takes them and bears witness with them? We have been chosen as adopted children of God and joint heirs to all the "treasures hidden in Christ." What are the treasures hidden in Christ? Which do you want the most? Which do you need the most? [Cabot Bible Church, Sunday Website](#)

___ 4th Reading: [John 14:8-17, \(25-27\)](#)

Philip had seen Jesus do many amazing things in his time with Jesus. What do you think he was asking for in this passage? What do we learn from Jesus' response to Philip? What picture of God do we gain by looking at Jesus' life and words? Jesus points to his miracles as evidence of his connection with God the Father. In what ways do the Gospel miracles point to God, and not to Jesus himself? To what degree do you think the ability to perform miracles indicates one's belief and why? Much has been made of Jesus' promises in its passage. What conditions does he place on the one who asks, and what will be the outcome? What "commands" of Jesus do you think he insists in this passage that we keep? In light of what Jesus has been saying about leaving his disciples soon, what is the significance of his promises about the Spirit? [Faith Element](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

God the Holy Spirit,
You are the restless breath of love that sweeps through the world.
You move where you will, breaking down barriers,
Stirring hearts to change, making all things possible.
Inspire each one of us to hunger and thirst for justice!
Come, Spirit of God,
Sweep through our world bringing great change.
May the bounty of your goodness be shared more justly,
So all may share in the rich blessings of your creation.
And, for us, bring transformation in our praying and living,
So that we may act justly, love mercy,
And walk humbly with you all the days of our lives.
Amen.

~ [Third Space](#)