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2017  
Interim Pastor/Head of Staff  
Sunday

June 4,  
Pentecost

## Commissioning of 2017 AKP Mission Team

### “Refreshed—and Re-Commissioned”

Scripture: Acts 2:1-12  
John 7:37-38

#### Acts 2:1-12

<sup>2</sup> When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues<sup>[a]</sup> as the Spirit enabled them.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.<sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?”<sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?<sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup> (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” <sup>12</sup> Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

#### John 7:37-38

<sup>37</sup> On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

Opening Prayer: Grant, O God of Wind and Flame, that Your Holy Spirit will breathe life into my words, and into our hearts and minds as Your word is proclaimed.

Through Jesus Christ, your Son, we ask this. Amen.

Let me start today with a quote from one our Trinity family:

*“I think it is so cool how God orchestrates the commissioning of the AKP team on Pentecost Sunday—as the disciples received the Holy Spirit they went out to tell others about Jesus—so the AKP team will be commissioned on Pentecost to go to AKP to tell others about Jesus.”*

And they’ve got it right: The commissioning of the AKP Team—which we’ve just done—has also occurred on this day of singular important in the history of the church, on Pentecost Sunday—and to the thought of this being a very cool thing, do I hear an “Amen!” out there?

Amen!

Amen! Indeed!

But let me suggest that while today—Pentecost Sunday—is of singular importance in the history of the church, that today is also about a new way of living—and loving—each and every day. Let me suggest that Pentecost is not just a day—but a season of life, much like Easter is meant to be. The sending out of the disciples, years ago, on this day—and the departure of our AKP mission team—in just a few hours time—are a way of living—even a new way of living for us friends, because a new age has begun: The Age of the Spirit. *Pentecost Sunday—in simplest terms—is the start of a new age: The Age of the Spirit.*

Now, does this mean that the Holy Spirit—the Spirit we speak of—came into being on this day? Well, no. As you and look to the Hebrew Bible—to the Old Testament—here we find the Holy Spirit being co-eternal, if you like, with God the Father and God the Son. We read of the wind that moves upon the waters in Genesis—bringing order out of chaos. Here, is the first mention of the Holy Spirit at work in scripture, and it is found right “in the beginning”, but—all the same—the Old Testament will speak of the gifting of the Holy Spirit—this empowering from above, so to speak--falling only upon

selected individuals—on the prophets of God, for instance. *But as we come to the event recorded in the Book of Acts, today, we see, a further—and final-- unfolding of God’s plan, and to a great moment foreseen by the prophet Joel:*

*“In the last days it will be, says the Lord, that I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh”—* he writes:

*“And so, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall see dreams.  
Even upon slaves—both men and women--in those days, I will pour out, my Spirit”*

***Here is a further—indeed, the final unfolding of God’s plan for humanity and it involves you and me—indeed, everyone who—as the prophet reminds us—“calls upon the name of the Lord.”*** The God who has made all flesh—every human being—desires for every human being to receive a gift from above—the gift of the Holy Spirit—the very breath of God—and a breath that gives life—new life—even an incredible new life, and we get a glimpse of what this new life looks like, when—as mentioned earlier—the first disciples—though locked in a room, are nevertheless visited by tongues of fire that kindle within them not just the ability to tell others about Jesus—to speak their native tongue, for instance—but—and just as importantly, I’d suggest—there was kindled with them also the passion to do the same—to go for the ends of the earth itself, in spreading the Word.

*And if you see this as more than a one day event, well, you are onto something!* For those first disciples, as we read later, here was “the first day of the rest of their lives,” really. Really! It was more than a one day event: *Within days they had scattered from Jerusalem, traveling in groups—sometimes alone—all of them making their way to the destination God has chosen for them—called them to journey to, and—just like today—when you and I take a road trip, if you like—we need to stop along the way to eat—to rest—to sometimes just take stock of where we are going....*

*“Come to me—all you who are heavy laden...”*

The words of our Lord—and words I know that I welcome, especially when I’ve been running hard all day...

How about you?

It is no coincidence that our Scripture lessons today feature both this selection from the Book of Acts—this re-telling of the events of Pentecost Sunday—and also this passage from John’s gospel, for—in this second passage—we hear the invitation to come to eat—to come—as we will in a few moments time—to this table—to The Holy Table—to share in bread—and the fruit of the vine. *Here—in a word—is refreshment. For me. For you.*

*“Let anyone who is thirsty, come to me....”*

*Here is an invitation to all us—not just to your AKP team—it’s to us all, and it’s to us all because all of us have also received the Holy Spirit—we’ve been commissioned, too....*

And don’t all of us become thirsty—at times?  
Who among us is not thirsty—and thirsty, let me suggest:  
For meaning?  
For money?  
For knowledge?  
For love—intimacy?  
For the things of this life?  
For being noticed?  
For even having some power?

To be human friends, is to be thirsty for something—for something more than we have—to be something more than we are, now....and note how I am leading us outside these walls with these comments, for when we leave this place, friends, we will be bombarded—once more--by the marketers—and by the advertisers.

They know us well—in fact, they spend many millions—if not even a few billion dollars, each year—to find out ways to sell us something that will quench our thirst—in fact—and as one commentator puts it: *“All advertising in our consumer-oriented society is essentially based on the pitch, “let anyone who is thirsty come here!”*

“Thirsty to lose weight?  
Do you need to diet?  
Well, come here—lose the weight you want—all as you eat the foods you want!”

“Want a new car?  
Well, don’t let this one pass you by!”

“Noticing those wrinkles—those fine lines?

Well, we have just the cream for you—correct them before it’s too late!”

And so on. The advertisers (and I used to be one myself, by the way) they—they!—know we are thirsty friends, and so they have learned to talk like Jesus—

It’s a seductive voice, to be sure—and one—more to the point—it is a voice that often draws our time—our energy—and not to mention our resources—in some fruitless directions:

How long has that fragrance made you really feel sexy?

Has that new car changed your world?

That diet kept off not just the pounds, but also the feeling that you are not beautiful because you are not slim—not youthful—because you lack a full head of hair—a set of sparkling, white teeth?

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me”—

*Our Lord’s invitation is made to us—to those who know Him—and know of Him—and to those of us who have just plain worn ourselves out by being distracted by the latest fad—the newest product—the latest sales pitch...Jesus knows how hard it is to withstand the constant pressure you and I face, in this consumer--oriented society; And so, you and I can—and we should—come to this Table to be refreshed—to drink from a vine whose fruit satisfies what we are really longing for—thirst for: Our Lord’s total—unconditional love—and acceptance—of us. Of who are we are. You. And me....*

But this invitation—as our text from Acts reminds us—is also about returning to the places where God has placed us--even called us to go—and perhaps the thought of this is a bit overwhelming: After all, won’t we find ourselves in the midst of a sea of thirsty people? I mean, if people are people—if all human beings—more to the point—are thirsty for something—won’t we get sucked dry? Won’t we—for all of our efforts to tell others about Jesus—won’t we run out of juice, at some point?

**Well—yes—and no...**

“Yes,” we will need to come back to this table—and perhaps as much as for our sake, as for the sake of those we love and serve.

But also—“no”, friends—and I say “no” because the One who feeds us here—our Lord Jesus Christ—is also the One who promises to make a river of us—you and me—into a river:

*“Out of the believers heart” he tells us, “will flow rivers of living water...”*

I say “no” because, you see, this return to the Table, friends, is about more than getting a top-up—it is about more than Jesus giving us just a glass of living water to drink, just to refresh ourselves: *It is also about Jesus making us into rivers of living water—it is—more to the point—Jesus giving us the Holy Spirit—it is about Him filling us with it, friends. And when you and I participate in this Life of The Spirit, friends, we are part of a river that never ceases to flow—that we are like the rivers and streams that we see in this Alaska springtime: Rivers and stream that overflow their banks—their confines--onto the dry land—that nourish it—that bring new life to it.* Yes, long ago, the first disciples were probably much like us, today: They rejoiced in the Lord. They professed—as we profess—that Jesus is the Messiah, the Risen One who has defeated Death, but—all the same—they also wondered how on earth they were going to do all that Jesus commanded them—how they would “make disciples of all nations.”

And then Pentecost came—and the gifting of the Holy Spirit came with it. Each of them—and not a few of them—received the awesome gift of being made—each of them--into a river of life—a source of living water: *Each of them found the gifts—and ability—the passion—the energy—to be the messenger God wished them to be, right then and there.*

*And so, let us come to this Table, today--on this Pentecost Sunday--not with low expectations, but with the highest ones because we know who Our Host is! Because we know WHO He is, and WHAT He is capable of doing, in us and through us—yes, let us—in confidence—re-commit ourselves to the journey that lasts a life time—and know they He will give us the means to make it!*

*All let all God’s missionaries say: “Amen!”*

*Amen!*

