

HOLY SPIRIT LAUNCHED!

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Acts 2:1-4, 16-21

May 19, 2013 – Pentecost/Confirmation Sunday

LET US PRAY: Surprising God, generous God, your Spirit is among us, sending us into new adventures, opening new doors, exploring possibilities beyond our dreams. May we be a people filled with the desire to respond, with the energy for your purpose, and the centeredness that only your Spirit can bring. May we be renewed by your word today! Amen.

Today, we are in celebration mode. We celebrate Pentecost. We celebrate the coming of the Spirit. We celebrate the birth of the church and the reception of our confirmands as members of this church. Today, we celebrate transformation!

When Steve Jobs launched iPhone in 2007, it was, in his own words, a revolutionary day. He got up, as he usually did, with jeans and a mock black turtleneck, in front of a big audience. Big screen dominating the stage, head mike on, and he said “Every once in a while, a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything.”

He used the word *revolutionary* repeatedly throughout his presentation. He presented three products: a, iPod, phone, and internet (he repeated this 5 times: the iPod, phone, and internet), and then he said, “I introduce to you the iPhone” -- which contained all three. The crowd screamed, excitement ensued. They were wowed. They were elated. They perhaps did not fully understand what was happening, what had just begun. But one thing was for sure: communication was not going to be the same again. We had just entered a time of revolutionary technology and human interaction.

Let us go a few centuries back. It was Pentecost day. Pentecost or *Shavout* “The feast of weeks, the feast of harvest or the latter first fruits day, the feast of the first fruits.” Celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover, involving, according to Deuteronomy 16:9-12: “a free-will offering in proportion to the blessing that you have received from God.” The feast included “you, your sons, and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who are among you,” and was based on remembrance “that you were a slave in Egypt.”

But this Pentecost day, it was different. They were gathered, praying, waiting for the comforter, the one that Jesus said he would send. And it came in the form of wind, tongues of fire, and spirit (wind, tongues of fire, and spirit x5.) If I was there, I would have said (following Steve Jobs' model), I introduce to you the Holy Spirit. **THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS LAUNCHED.** It was a revolutionary event that changed everything!

That event changed the course of history. That event changed the way we communicated with God. That event instantly changed the way those who were there communicated with each other. Crazy things ensued, people were confused, and Peter got inspired! The disciples went from cowards to prophets. The church was born!

The world would not be the same after that.

In the New Testament, we see that John, Paul, and Luke have a great deal to say about the Spirit.

- For John, the Spirit is the Advocate, the continuing comforting presence of Jesus in the church,
- For Paul, the Spirit is what unites us with Christ, makes us into his body and gives particular gifts to each person for the sake of the community,
- For Luke-Acts, the Spirit is the power of God, the mighty burning wind that blows the church into new and unexpected places of ministry¹

But, of the three portraits of the Spirit, the most unsettling is the one in Acts. It leaves us with a sense of vulnerability. Where is the Spirit going to blow next? What is the Spirit going to do next?

Being a disciple of Christ in the newborn church means that we will be lifted and moved, like in windstorms. And, for those of us who like order and predictability, this poses a challenge.

The spirit came and it changed the community into a community of prophets: Acts 2:18, "they shall prophesy." The community had gathered in Jesus' name, and now they were transformed into something new. We see the revolution of "prophethood of ALL believers." In essence, this is what it means to be the church. This is the identity given to us by the Spirit's claiming, calling, and empowering not only a priesthood of ALL believers, but a prophethood of all believers.[1]

[1] Brian Peterson, Commentary on Acts 1-21, Luther Seminary

Pentecost isn't over! The Holy Spirit is launched, and we will never be the same.

Our experiences continue to evolve. So, I invite us this morning that, for the next few weeks, we identify Pentecost moments in our congregation and in our lives.

- A Pentecost moment for me was when Geoffrey Smith, one of our confirmands this morning, in one of our discussions, said: "We need to forget about ourselves and express our inner Christ," which is the preparation for worship this morning.
- A Pentecost moment for me was when Tom Lombardi, another one of Confirmands expressed that serving coffee during coffee ministry and serving the community gave him great joy.
- A Pentecost moment for me was last week when I Baptized Bo, and she was so moved and touched by the Spirit that it brought tears to her eyes.

I invite us to think about those Pentecost moments, when the Spirit moves in ways that surprise us...when the Spirit takes us in directions that we did not expect or planned. And they were not earth shaking, but surely they were transformative and revolutionary.

Pentecost is still happening! HOLY SPIRIT IS LAUNCHED! It changed the world, it is still changing our world.

Can you perceive it? Amen.