

“GO THERE!.....AND WAIT!”

**A SERMON BASED ON THE NEW TESTAMENT
BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (ACTS
2:1-21) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON
MAY 31, 2020----- (PENTECOST SUNDAY 2020)**

IMAGINE THIS: A NATION HAS ENDURED A
SERIES OF HOSTILE ACTIONS FROM A
NEIGHBORING STATE..... ATTEMPTS TO
NEGOTIATE HAVE FAILED..... EVERY DIPLOMATIC
CHANNEL HAS BEEN USED, BUT TO NO AVAIL.
FINALLY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATION
DECLARES WAR AGAINST THE AGGRESSOR.

WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY, THE OTHER
POLITICAL LEADERS AND THE GENERALS
LISTEN FOR GUIDANCE FROM THE PRESIDENT.

HE GATHERS THEM TOGETHER AND SAYS,
"THERE IS A RETREAT CENTER HERE IN THE
CAPITAL. *I WANT YOU TO GO THERE AND WAIT.*"

"WAIT?" THEY ASK IN ASTONISHMENT. "YES," HE
ANSWERS, "WAIT."

OR IMAGINE THIS: ONE OF THE BIG THREE
AUTOMOBILE COMPANIES CONTINUES TO LOSE
MONEY QUARTER AFTER QUARTER. ITS MARKET
SHARE IS IN DRAMATIC DECLINE. THE CEO
RESIGNS.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS BRINGS IN THE BEST POSSIBLE PERSON THEY CAN FIND FOR THE JOB..... THEY EXPECT HIM TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING. HE CONTACTS ALL THE DEPARTMENT HEADS AND TELLS THEM TO GO TO THE CONFERENCE ROOM AND PLAN TO BE THERE FOR A GOOD LONG WHILE. "SHALL WE BRING IN OUR MARKET RESEARCH? DO YOU WANT TO SEE WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING IN DEVELOPMENT? ARE WE GOING TO REVIEW OUR LAST STRATEGIC PLAN?" THEY ASK. "NO," HE REPLIES. *"WE'RE GOING TO WAIT."* "WAIT?" THEY ECHO. "THAT'S RIGHT," HE SAYS. *"WAIT."* ALL OF US HAVE SOME EXPERIENCE WITH WAITING.

WHO CAN'T RECALL THE DELIGHT OF GOING TO THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE? DON'T YOU WISH YOU COULD CHARGE THE DOCTOR FOR YOUR TIME? NO DOUBT YOU'VE HAD THE JOY OF WAITING IN THE GROCERY STORE CHECK-OUT LINE. YOU SOMETIMES START TO WONDER IF YOUR DISCOUNT COUPONS ARE GOING TO EXPIRE BEFORE YOU EVER GET TO THE CASHIER. AND THEN, OF COURSE, SOME OF YOU ARE WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE GREAT FUN OF WAITING FOR A SPOUSE. "I'M ALMOST READY." YOU HEAR....AND THEN....SOME FORTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER, YOU FINALLY GET IN THE CAR. WAITING IS AMONG OUR HIGH POINTS IN LIFE, ISN'T IT?

SERIOUSLY??..... MOSTLY WE FEEL LIKE IT'S
EMPTY SPACE, DEAD TIME, FRUITLESS, A
FRUSTRATING NOTHING THAT WE HAVE TO
ENDURE BETWEEN HAPPENINGS. THE LESS WE
WAIT, THE HAPPIER WE ARE.

YOU CAN IMAGINE THE FEELINGS OF THE
FOLLOWERS OF JESUS. THEY HAD SEEN THE
ENEMIES OF THE LORD TAKE HIM AND CRUCIFY
HIM.... THEY WERE DEVASTATED BY THE
DEFEAT..... THEY WERE DISILLUSIONED BY THE
APPARENTLY FAILED LEADERSHIP OF JESUS.
THEY HAD PINNED ALL THEIR HOPES ON HIS
MESSIAHSHIP, ONLY TO SEE HIM OVERWHELMED
BY HIS OPPOSITION AND KILLED.

BUT THEN — ELATION! — HE BROKE FREE FROM DEATH AND THE GRAVE. IN A STARTLING ACT OF GOD, JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD. THE DISCIPLES WERE TERRIFIED AND OVERJOYED. FOR FORTY DAYS THE RISEN CHRIST STRENGTHENED THEIR FAITH, RESTORED THEIR HOPE AND TAUGHT THEM HIS TRUTH. CAN YOU IMAGINE ANYTHING MORE THRILLING, MORE INSPIRING? THOSE FOLLOWERS WHO HAD FLED FROM THE CROSS WERE READY TO CHARGE INTO THE WORLD. THEY HAD REGAINED THEIR COURAGE AND MOMENTUM FOR MINISTRY. JESUS JUST HAD TO POINT AND THEY WERE READY TO TAKE OFF.

THE DISCIPLES WERE STRAINING AT THE REIGNS. THEY WERE FILLED WITH URGENCY. YOU CAN HEAR IT IN THE QUESTION THEY ASKED JESUS:

"LORD, IS NOW THE TIME WHEN YOU WILL BRING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND RESTORE ISRAEL TO A GLORY NOT KNOWN BEFORE? WE'RE READY, LORD."

BUT JESUS ANSWERED:

"THAT'S GOD'S BUSINESS. YOU JUST NEED TO FIND A NICE ROOM IN JERUSALEM WHERE YOU CAN WAIT."

***"WAIT? SURELY YOU DON'T WANT US TO LOSE
OUR MOMENTUM, LORD."***

"YOU HEARD ME," SAID JESUS. "GO AND WAIT."

WHY? NOT FOR NOTHING, THAT'S FOR SURE.

JESUS SAID, "SO YOU CAN RECEIVE POWER

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU

AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES TO THE ENDS

OF THE EARTH."

*WAITING FOR POWER — UNSEEN, INTANGIBLE
DIVINE POWER. DID THEY REALLY NEED TO DO
THAT — AND DO WE?*

*COULDN'T THEY CARRY ON WITH THEIR NATIVE
STRENGTH AND CAN'T WE?*

*WHY DID THEY HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE
PENTECOSTAL POWER OF GOD? ISN'T A GOOD
PLAN AND A LITTLE DETERMINATION ENOUGH?
EVIDENTLY JESUS DIDN'T THINK SO. "GO AND
WAIT," HE SAID.*

THE PROBLEM WAS, EVEN THOUGH THEY HEARD JESUS' WORDS, THEY STILL DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT. IT WAS NOT AS THOUGH THEY WERE WAITING FOR A DATE ON A CALENDAR OR THE ARRIVAL OF A PACKAGE OF A CERTAIN DESCRIPTION. THEY WERE WAITING FOR POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT WOULD COME. THAT WASN'T SOMETHING THEY COULD LOOK OUT THE WINDOW AND SEE COMING DOWN THE ROAD. IT WAS AN UNKNOWN, A MYSTERY. SO THEY OBEDIENTLY WAITED, PRAYERFULLY, TRUSTINGLY. I DON'T KNOW HOW PATIENTLY, BUT THEY WAITED FOR THE PROMISED SPIRIT.

FINALLY, SOMETHING HAPPENED. IT WAS LIKE A WIND BLOWING THROUGH THE ROOM. THEN SOMETHING LIKE FLICKERING TONGUES OF FIRE APPEARED AND ALIGHTED ON EACH OF THE DISCIPLES. THEY OPENED THEIR MOUTHS AND BEGAN TO SPEAK, NOT AS THEY NORMALLY DID BUT AS GOD ENABLED THEM TO SPEAK, IN A LANGUAGE PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS COULD HEAR AND UNDERSTAND. AND AFTER THEY FINISHED TALKING, 3,000 PEOPLE WERE BAPTIZED THAT DAY AND THE CHURCH WAS BORN. *ALL THAT BECAUSE THE DISCIPLES WAITED; THEY WAITED FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT.*

COULD IT BE THAT WE WOULD BE BETTER OFF
IF WE WAITED AND DIDN'T JUST DIVE INTO THE
WORK? IS IT POSSIBLE THAT WE NEED TO
FAITHFULLY AND FERVENTLY PRAY EVEN MORE
THAN WE NEED TO PLAN? WE HAVE NO SERIOUS
SHORTAGE OF INTELLIGENCE, TALENT OR GOOD
WILL, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE POWER OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT, THE POWER TO BE CHRIST'S
WITNESSES?

PENTECOST IS ABOUT EVANGELISM. WHEN ALL
IS SAID AND DONE----AT THE END OF THE DAY----
THE SAYING AND DOING OF THE CHURCH IS
INTENDED TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD
AND BRING PEOPLE TO FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

ONE MORE TIME.....YOUR TAKEAWAY FOR
TODAY:

*PENTECOST IS ABOUT EVANGELISM. WHEN ALL
IS SAID AND DONE----AT THE END OF THE DAY----
THE SAYING AND DOING OF THE CHURCH IS
INTENDED TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD
AND BRING PEOPLE TO FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.*

WE NEED THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO
DO THAT JOB FOR SEVERAL REASONS.
FIRST, ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN ENABLE US
TO OVERCOME WHAT THE LATE FRED
CRADDOCK ONCE CALLED "A SENSE OF SELF-
DISQUALIFICATION."

OUR AWARENESS OF OUR MORAL FLAWS AND SPIRITUAL SHORTCOMINGS CAN LEAD US TO "BOW OUT" WHEN IT COMES TO BEING WITNESSES FOR THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST..... "HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE OTHER PEOPLE TO BECOME CHRISTIAN WHEN I'M SUCH A SHABBY SPECIMEN MYSELF? HOW CAN I TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT FAITH IN CHRIST WHEN I HAVE SO MANY PROBLEMS OF MY OWN?" AND SO, WITH COMMENTS LIKE THESE, WE DECLINE TO BE WITNESSES BECAUSE WE'RE NOT WORTHY. MAYBE SOME DAY WHEN WE FINALLY "GET OUR ACT TOGETHER" WE WILL SHARE THE GOOD NEWS BUT, FOR THE TIME BEING, SOMEONE ELSE WILL HAVE TO DO IT.

IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE EARLIEST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS THOUGHT THIS WAY. PETER COULD HAVE SAID, "HOW CAN I URGE PEOPLE TO GIVE THEIR LIVES TO CHRIST? I'VE DENIED HIM AND CLAIMED I NEVER EVEN KNEW HIM." AND THINK OF PAUL: "HOW CAN I TELL THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST WHEN THEY ALL KNOW I HELPED BRUTALIZE CHRISTIANS?" WE COULD GO DOWN THE LIST AND FIND SERIOUS IMPERFECTIONS IN EVERY APOSTLE. THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF THE CHURCHES. THEY WERE TAINTED BY RACISM, SELFISHNESS, HERESY, PRIDE, HALF-HEARTEDNESS,

AND YET BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT THEY OVERCAME THEIR SENSE OF SELF-DISQUALIFICATION IN ORDER TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST. WE NEED THE SPIRIT FOR THE SAME REASON.

SECOND, WE NEED THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO ENABLE US TO GET PAST OUR DIFFERENCES IN ORDER TO MAKE VITAL CONTACT WITH OTHERS. THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL PEOPLE OF EVERY RACE, NATION, GENDER AND CLASS..... BUT WE TEND TO LIVE BY THE "BIRDS OF A FEATHER" PRINCIPLE. WHEN WE HAVE OUR "RATHERS," WE'D RATHER STAY AROUND PEOPLE WHO ARE LARGELY LIKE US.

ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN EMPOWER US TO
GET BEYOND OUR GROUP WITH THE GOSPEL.
DON'T GET ME WRONG HERE; IT MAKES SENSE
TO BEGIN BY BEING WITNESSES TO PEOPLE
WHO ARE LIKE US. THE JEWISH CHRISTIAN
APOSTLE PAUL HAD A SLOGAN: "FIRST TO THE
JEWS." BUT HE DIDN'T LEAVE IT THERE. THE
SECOND PART OF HIS SLOGAN WAS, "BUT ALSO
TO THE GREEKS."

TO REINFORCE THIS -----AND FOR YOUR
HOMEWORK READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:21-23

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST, PEOPLE FROM
MANY NATIONS HEARD THE MESSAGE OF THE
CRUCIFIED AND RISEN CHRIST..... FROM A
DIVERSE COLLECTION OF PEOPLE, GOD FORGED
A CHURCH..... ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN
ENABLE THAT TO HAPPEN.....

THE SAME IS TRUE IN OUR TIME AND IN OUR
CONGREGATION. PEOPLE DON'T HAVE TO BE
FROM DIFFERENT NATIONS AND CULTURES TO
NEED THE SPIRIT TO BRING THEM TOGETHER.
WHILE THERE ARE TIMES THAT WE MAY FEEL
SEPARATION -----WE ARE FAR MORE ALIKE ONE
ANOTHER THAN WE ARE DIFFERENT FROM EACH
OTHER.

YET DIFFERENCES IN VIEWPOINTS,
TEMPERAMENTS AND TASTES CAN, AND HAVE
AT TIMES, LED TO BREECHES IN
RELATIONSHIPS..... BY THE POWER OF THE
SPIRIT, THESE CAN BE OVERCOME SO THAT
TOGETHER WE CAN BE WITNESSES.

THIRD, ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN EMPOWER
US TO SPEAK WITH OTHERS ABOUT SOMETHING
SO IMMENSELY IMPORTANT AS THE HOPEFUL
MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL. WE ARE
COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT ALL SORTS OF
THINGS: THE PRICE OF LETTUCE, THE LEVEL OF
TAXES, THE ANTICS OF OUR CHILDREN,

THE WEATHER, OUR FAVORITE SPORTS TEAMS,
THE STRUGGLES OF OUR WORK PLACES, OUR
RETIREMENT PLANS; OR IN THESE DAYS COVID-
19 FILLS OUR AIRWAYS AND CONVERSATIONS.....

SO....HOW DO WE MOVE FROM THE TRANSITORY
ISSUES TO SPEAK OF ETERNITY WITH GOD? IT'S
NOT EASY FOR MOST OF US. WE NEED THE
POWER OF THE SPIRIT.

SOME YEARS AGO THE DEAN OF A SEMINARY
NOTED THAT HE HAD BEEN SERVING A CHURCH
THAT HAD ADDED ANOTHER WORSHIP SERVICE
IN ORDER TO REACH MORE PEOPLE. NOT
EVERYONE FAVORED THE CHANGE.

A MAN CAME TO HIM ONE DAY WITH A COMPLAINT. "I JUST FOUND OUT THAT THE MAN I'VE BEEN WORKING BESIDE FOR THREE YEARS IS A MEMBER OF OUR CHURCH. I'D NEVER SEEN HIM IN WORSHIP BECAUSE HE GOES TO THAT NEW SERVICE. THAT JUST GOES TO SHOW THAT WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TWO SERVICES."

NOT BEING PARTICULARLY HESITANT TO SPEAK HIS MIND, THE DEAN REPLIED:

"THE REASON THAT FOR THREE YEARS YOU DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS A MEMBER OF OUR CHURCH IS BECAUSE YOU'VE NOT MADE AN EFFORT TO SPEAK TO YOUR CO-WORKERS ABOUT YOUR FAITH. THAT'S THE REAL PROBLEM."

PRAYER AND WAITING BEFORE GOD CAN GIVE US THE COURAGE AND CAN OPEN OUR EYES TO OPPORTUNITIES TO SPEAK THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST. SO OFTEN WE MISS OPPORTUNITIES AND ALLOW TIMIDITY TO TAKE OVER. THAT IS WHY IT IS CRUCIAL THAT WE LOOK TO THE POWER OF GOD AND PRAY FOR GUIDANCE.

IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT
IMPORTANT THINGS, INTIMATE THINGS. BUT
SUCH TALK IS INDISPENSABLE. ONLY THE HOLY
SPIRIT CAN EQUIP US FOR IT.

THE SPIRIT IS NOT LIKELY TO ARRIVE FOR US
WITH THE SOUND OF A MIGHTY WIND. IT IS
PROBABLY A WASTE OF TIME LOOKING FOR THE
SPIRIT'S ARRIVAL WITH FLICKERING TONGUES
LIKE FIRE. AND WHEN WE OPEN OUR MOUTHS,
PEOPLE OF EVERY NATION ARE UNLIKELY TO
UNDERSTAND US WITHOUT A TRANSLATOR.

BUT THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OURS.

GOD CAN AND WILL CONTINUE TO POUR OUT
THE SPIRIT UPON US TO EMPOWER US TO BE
CHRIST'S WITNESSES IN OUR TIME. IF WE WILL
OPEN OUR HEARTS TO GOD, WE WON'T HAVE TO
WAIT LONG.

PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND
FOR ME.....AMEN!