

Pentecost...

In the beginning, the Spirit of God breathed and danced upon the deep. God was bringing something new into existence. God was creating. God created vast expanses and bright burning fires in the heavens, galaxy upon galaxy filled with extraordinary stars. Eventually, in a far flung corner of the immense universe there was a tiny planet that began to cool—it was not particularly impressive and it circled round a not particularly impressive star, kind of a small star really. But the God of the universe decided this would be a good place to continue the experiment and so God began to breathe life into being. God brought forth creatures, starting very small and then they grew larger and larger and larger, such a great diversity of creatures that came into existence some of which flitted into and out of existence in the blink of an eye.

But like a potter continually working the clay to find that perfect form, God brought into existence a not particularly impressive creature, at least not in size

or looks or feats of strength, but this creature, more than any other of God's vast and mysterious creation, had the ability to think, and feel deeply and love with immensity. It was upon the creation of this creature that God felt it was time to rest because in this creature, God had truly created something that mirrored God's image. This ability to think, and empathize, and love deeply, made this new creation a kind of self-portrait, it was the kind of creation that could create. God loved this creature so very deeply and It was the kind of creation that could love back.

But as time went on, these creatures, with wills of their own began to forget that love was the purpose for their existence. These creatures began to desire power over love. This desire for power lead to the birth of hatred in their hearts. They invited Evil into their midst. They invented competition and greed. There were many things these new creatures did to grasp this power that they craved.

On one occasion they all banded together to build a great tower. This tower, they said, would help them

grasp the power of God for themselves. And so they worked tirelessly, brick upon brick, stone upon stone at a place called Babel. Seeking to grasp God's power and bring it down for themselves. They fell from this enormous tower and shattered like glass into ten thousand pieces. The great unity they had been created for became great division. The language they all spoke became gibberish as no one could understand the other anymore. It became Babel. They were all babbling at each other. This misunderstanding led to more competition, more violence, more methods of exploitation, more suspicion and tribalism.

God found one of these tribes and sought through them to set things aright. For centuries God worked patiently through these people sending prophets and sages to remind people of their purpose but it was no use...

God had to send the most powerful emissary, a being both man and God. A being who flowed directly from God. This being was born of a human mother. This being came to remind humans that God's greatest power was love and that it was love for which they were made.

This wise Godman taught and healed and fed the hungry and stood upon the deep waters. This Godman cast out Evil wherever he found it and restored health and wholeness in its place. This man was God's son, and God was very pleased. The good work God had begun was being restored. This Godman gathered friends and reminded them that the most important thing was to love God and to love one another. But those who were ravenous for God's power grasped the Godman and sought to rip it out of him torturing him and executing him. "Let's see if you really are God's son," they said.

"Forgive them for they know not what they do." he said.

When it seemed as though violence and chaos had once again won. When it seemed like hope was once again crushed. When it seemed like love had been buried deep in a dark tomb, something remarkable happened. A single flame awakened and pushed back the dark. He who had been defeated arose from the depths of death and destroyed death. Evil thought it had won, and found it its surprise it had been defeated and cast out instead and this Godman arose to new and glorious life. A new Risen Life he was now inviting people to share in! This Godman returned to the heavenly realms with the promise of a gift. "Wait patiently in the city until it comes" he told his friends.

Ten days later, when the friends had gathered, this new fire awoke upon the heads of all who were present. It was an extraordinary thing to witness! An immense wind blew over them like the wind that danced upon the deep at the beginning of creation. These people from far flung regions and tribes, like ten thousand shards of glass became fused together again. They could understand each other again for

the first time. "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 [their] own languages" heard the friends speaking about God's deeds of power. The great divisions that had caused so much pain had been undone and all who were gathered experienced that first unity. That pure unity which God had created them for. All who were gathered experienced the fullness of God's love on that day.

On that day a new creation was formed out of the wind and fire of the Holy Spirit. On that day a new people was formed. To this new people the apostle Paul wrote, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

This new creation spread all over the world. It spread like wildfire, this new creation brought kindness and love, healing, and hope throughout the nations and throughout the generations. They

brought light in the midst of dark times. They brought loving witness in the face of tyranny and oppression.

Today we gather because of those who gathered on that first Pentecost. We are the torch bearers. We are the heirs. We are the descendants. We carry the flame that awoke on the night of the resurrection. We carry the flame that was born upon the heads of those first disciples. We are called to be Hope in this world. We are called to be Healing in this world. We are called to cast out evil and replace it with wholeness.

The Church's primary job is to teach the disciples of Jesus how to love. This is a school of love. Love requires patience, forbearance, grace, and forgiveness. Love isn't easy, it is hard work, it takes a lot of practice with people you trust like learning to play an instrument or learning to dance. That is why we have this place. There is no other organization on earth whose fundamental purpose is to Love God with heart soul mind and strength and to love neighbor as self. The Church is the

vessel of those values. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate, our Comforter, our guide and our teacher. It is the Holy Spirit who abides in us and transfigures us into the very image of Christ.

We are called to remind the world what its purpose is: To love. We are a part of this great story. May we not forget it. May we continue to proclaim it. Happy Pentecost. Happy birthday. Amen.