

What's in Your Heart 5-31-20

Today is Pentecost Sunday. It is the day the Holy Spirit made a grand entrance into the Shavuot celebration, a spring harvest festival for the Israelites, and the name in Greek being Pentecost. Many Jews from many different regions had gathered in Jerusalem for the festival, but not one would have expected what happened during the course of the day. The Holy Spirit came like the rush of a violent wind and it filled the house where they were assembled, the book of Acts informed us. It would be like a group of people assembled for the Philadelphia flower show or a hockey game or other sporting event where a great number of people could be found at one time in one place for a specific event. It was a loud entrance, but it moved swiftly as tongues of fire appeared on each man's shoulder. Suddenly it was evident to all that in seconds, something strange and unusual had occurred.

We have times in life when events come swiftly. Some of our largest tragedies occur so fast we have to stop hours or even days later and go back through our memories of the moments to think about how it all really happened. Also some of our best memories such as a wedding or the birth of a child (even though anticipate) move so quickly that some people really need the video to recall the chain of events and what they may have missed as they became focused on just one part of the event. It all really comes down to how we receive the good and the bad in our hearts, and how we handle and acknowledge this gift from God we call the Holy Spirit.

We've changed the name to Holy Spirit from in what some churches called Holy Ghost, and I think that's a better term because ghost makes most of us think of something bad, something wicked, evil, with poor intentions. Spirit is more light, airy, makes you think of a person who may be deceased but still is with you in "spirit". The Holy Spirit is so vital to our lives, to our Christianity and it was always there with God but the gift of it was made clear by Jesus once he was glorified. In John we read the short passage Jesus speaks about drinking in the living water and he was speaking about the Spirit. It would be a great gift to the disciples who would have the ability to cure the sick and do other miracles in God and Jesus' name after Jesus would ascend to heaven and leave them all on their own to carry out their missions.

Our missions come from the heart. Each of us is designed to serve a purpose on this earth. Some of us are more widely known and received by the world due to fame, wealth, publicity but that doesn't mean those not in the limelight do not have a purpose. In our hearts we find that purpose, and it is up to us to accept the purpose we have and to make it known to others by our deeds, good works, friendships, loves and even our times of sorrow. We have all been given the same type of heart to work with, five chambers, pumping blood to our veins and arteries, supplying our vital organs moment by moment. We all do not have the same purpose in life, and this was even true for the disciples in that they each were gifted a little bit differently. Some were more likely better speakers. Peter was bold and unafraid to take chances which was to his favor and also against him many times, but he persevered because what he had in his heart was the love of the Lord, the memories of the time he walked and talked with Jesus and his purpose was clear. Thomas who they called "doubting Thomas" due to his insistence on feeling Jesus' wounds from the crucifixion went to start churches in all of what we know as the continent of Asia, which was a great task in a land we only think of as being Buddhist. Yet I can assure you, having seen it with my own eyes, there are many Christian churches in Asia including the United Methodists.

What's in our hearts controls our actions. We get erratic at times, upset with one another, because it is this organ that keeps us alive as well as kills us when we don't take care of these bodies we are given. Our brains send the messages to the heart, but our feelings we consider dwelling in our hearts which actually ache when we are in love and hurt when we are disappointed in love. We blame the heart for some of our troubles, but it's more than that. When the men assembled on that day of Pentecost suddenly heard one another speaking and they could understand them knowing their languages were different, they became confused and upset. The statement was quickly made that these men must have had too much wine to drink and were obviously hallucinating the effects. It was once again Peter, the man who spoke first and acted later, who had to take the lead and calm the crowds.

Parents do this in life, they calm the chaos in their homes when siblings argue. They also teach us firsthand about love by the ways we were brought up by them. They teach us that we will not die from a broken heart and must be strong enough to endure

the pain as it will eventually fade. Peter wanted the people to realize this was a gift from God just like falling in love is a gift for us. It was another sign of God's love for us that he sent the Spirit that day to help out the men assembled so they could have a much-needed conversation. Peter tells the people the Spirit is being poured out upon them all and how they use that gift is up to them.

Peter speaks to them about the last days and how people will see visions and tell of the future. There will be signs on the earth below of blood, fire and smoky mist. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood all before the Lord returns. Some of these if not all have occurred to us by now. We recently had a blood moon in the evening sky, a rare occurrence. We have eclipses of the sun when it appears the sun has turned dark. Our earth has had devastating natural occurrences of tornadoes, tsunamis, and hurricanes of great magnitude as well as earthquakes with great force enough to tear down bridges and buildings. Yet it is not time for the Lord to return, not quite yet. We have lived during a time we will never forget, Covid 19, a deadly virus which took thousands not just here in the states, but all over the world. Was this God sent or evil?

Out of these natural disasters and from this virus which took us all into quarantine, we can see good emerge once again. Our little human hearts know what to do to help others. We have learned how to show love in the smallest of ways, things we may have forgotten how to do. Suddenly, many people were posting on Facebook aid to others in need. There were multiple offers to fetch groceries and other needed items to those at risk who had to be in strict quarantine for fear of death from the virus. We called our friends and neighbors just to say "hey" and to be sure we heard another voice on the other end the line. Our technology became more vital than ever to send encouragement by way of church through a laptop or phone when no video equipment was present. We lit up the postal service once again who had show decline in sales of simple things like postage stamps because everyone had email, but they don't. I am still mailing each shut-in a card weekly easily using a roll of stamps in several short weeks. We at Grace are still mailing the sermons to those without Wi-Fi so they could at the very least read the words the pastor spoke into a small camera to send out for not only members to see, but anyone who found it by chance or intention on You Tube or our

webpage. We learned quickly to listen to our hearts and make the moves in the directions we needed to move in order to ensure the safety of ourselves and others.

It was not through any evil government device to inflict this virus upon us. There will be condemnation of how things were handled over the years to follow, but we found out quickly to listen to our hearts that urged us to listen to the brain and stay home. It has been a difficult time we lived through, but we will not forget it and some good has come from it. Our hearts have been reopened for business, long before the retailers and restaurateurs. We learned how to make the necessary changes in life without sacrificing too much normalcy to live our lives and we showed great love in doing so.

What is in your heart is not just blood and vessels pumping that blood. What is in our hearts is love, caring, tenderness, remorse, sadness, but also great joy. Jesus had the Holy Spirit all along, but he made it a gift to the disciples to do good in the world he left them to tend. He has given it to us the day we were born to also do good in the world we have entered into. Seek out what is in your hearts, follow your dreams and continue to do the good you started in a time you found difficult and hard to handle. We may have had many times of loneliness and despair, but that's our fault because we are never alone when we as Jesus says drink the living water. What's in your heart are many things, many emotions, and even many dreams. We have to take care of our hearts, and not let them clog up with all the bad things we put in our bodies. We have to keep them strong and healthy to continue to pour out the gifts of love, joy, peace and hope. Let your hearts be strong and listen to them as the brain guides their functions. We all have a mission, live yours out and you too, like those disciples Jesus left behind, can change the world. The ultimate answer to the question of the day, what's in your heart? Answer simple – Jesus. Amen.