



Inset: Our Gathering Space potentially expanded into narthex

“A Future with Hope: Inspired”

Day of Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, May 19, and 20, 2018

All Services
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner, Jr.
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Acts 2:1-21;
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

So today is Pentecost when we reflect on how the Spirit has been given to the church to inspire and to each individual within it. And so, I was thinking to myself what does an inspired person look like? What would the characteristics be? Would you know him or her if you met them? I was thinking about that and I would imagine there are some characteristics that pop up right away. I would imagine that a person who is inspired by God's spirit has passion. That they can see somehow into the future of God's preferred vision for their life. That they would look for opportunities that maybe others wouldn't be able to see. Maybe in the same way George Bernard Shaw said and was quoted by Robert Kennedy – *There are those who look at the way things are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?* I would imagine inspired person is a person with generosity toward God and others. That they ask themselves what can I do, how can I help, what do you need? I would imagine an inspired person positive, more optimistic, the glass is half full rather than half empty. And that they would be an encourager of other people to join them in that journey of life.

I would imagine they would be a learner, a listener, always seeking how they can grow, what can they learn, how can things be different? And I would imagine they would be people of faith. That they would have the trust in God, that God is the one who is ultimately in charge of their life. And in many ways, like Jesus, lived that quote “Your will be done Lord, not mine.”

When I think of our biblical witness for today certainly the Apostle Peter the disciple Peter is one of those spirit-filled individuals an inspired individual. On the first Pentecost the disciples were waiting in the upper room, that same room where they celebrated the last supper with their Lord. And now a number of days after Jesus had ascended into heaven they are waiting. Maybe they're still a little fearful that they might be rounded up like some of the other disciples or perhaps they're just wondering when they are going to receive this promised advocate that Jesus spoke about. But before you know a mighty wind came and St. Luke when he writes it in Acts says It was as if tongues of the fire fell on the disciples and they were with new abilities, they were able to speak in languages that previously they did not understand or know. They went out

into the street proclaiming the mighty acts of God, the stories of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.

Previously they couldn't do that. What was impossible for them to be able to speak in other languages now becomes possible. And the crowd gathers and wonders what is going on and some sneer at these disciples for planting the message of Jesus.

I wonder if they were some of the same crowd that sneered and jeered Jesus on his way to his crucifixion? Some of us know what it's like to be sneered at. You might have experienced negativity in your life, you might have heard people say to you, you'll never amount to anything. You can't do it. Who do you think you are?

Brothers and sisters there's so much in the church in America today that is negative. People lacking energy or power or excitement churches lacking life. Our Bishop who preached a number of weeks ago shared with us a statistic that many congregations in our area have experienced a 30% decline in attendance over the last ten years. And for those of us who were in this area of 1990's you might remember the last of so many of the biggest and strongest congregations that we have in the city of Harrisburg, within ten years so many were closed or diminished in size.

Sometimes we want to cower in fear about all of the changes in our world or in our church. Sometimes we want to get angry about what seems out of control, but anger and fear is not the answer. Today is Pentecost. Today we celebrate the Spirit, the promised Spirit which has come to inspire us. And with that inspiration is the promise of life in all of its abundance, and you know what the opposite of inspiration is don't you? Expiration. We expire, we die. And there is no in-between between life or death, it's either life in the Spirit or death. But we are promised God's Holy Spirit which promises us life. And now is the time to experience such life. And we have that confidence that God's Spirit lives in you through Holy Baptism.

So, what does an inspired church look like? I imagine it would be the same as with some individuals. An inspired church would be passionate, it would understand mission and ministry and holy purpose. It would live out this holy vision that God has placed in the hearts of its members. An inspired church would be thankful and giving for all that God has done. It would see God as one of abundance and not a world of scarcity. It would encourage the use of spiritual gifts so that all the people of God working together could see that we could do so much more. An inspired church would form disciples listening to God through words, through baptismal promise, and as we gather around the meal of life. In such an inspired church would have faith that God would provide us with whatever we need.

Today is Pentecost. Be fearless, go out, believe that we can accomplish what God has placed in our hearts. Be open to the spirit of inspiration that it provides, and when we do that it will be contagious, it will light the light of faith and move the church forward and out into the world sharing the love of God that is so real, so real to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We should never underestimate the power of God's Spirit. Poet William Blake wrote about "*Pentecost*:"

*Unless the eye catch fire
God will not be seen
Unless the ear catch fire
God will not be heard
Unless the tongue catch fire
God will not be named
Unless the heart catch fire
God will not be loved
Unless the mind catch fire
God will not be known.*

Today is Pentecost when God sends forth the Spirit, amazing things happen, sins are forgotten, and barriers are broken, communities are formed, and advisors can become partners, unities established, addiction is broken. People are renewed, and hope is established, the future is given, and the church happens. This church happened, united in power for God's holy purposes.

God has a plan for you and for me and it is a future with hope. It begins with trusting in the Holy Spirit, that Holy fire which breaks down and at the same time strengthens that vein of God that moves and shakes us to our very core, that breath of God that gives life and inspiration to God's one holy church. Today we are invited to be open to receive, open hearts, open minds, and open arms. Be inspired. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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