

Sunday, May 11th, 2008
Pentecost Sunday

John 7:37-39, Acts 2:1-21
And Many Believed...

Pentecost is only about one thing. It is about incredible possibilities. It is about the day when the Spirit descends and all bets are off. After all, on this day, the fearful Peter, the one who cannot admit that he is a Galilean who came with **the** Galilean, can stand and preach to the people of Jerusalem. After all, but 50 some odd days before, Peter sat around a campfire and denied that he knew Jesus separate times.

So what has changed? As our Pentecostal brothers and sisters would proclaim, "he got the Spirit!" or perhaps, "the Spirit got him!" I would answer that he finally understood what Jesus was all about. Not what Jesus meant in a specific parable, or at a certain time, but the basic underlying things that drove Jesus to do what he did. To put it most simply, Peter is now able to say what it is that he believes.

Just like 6 of our youth today. Just like many of you through the years. Just like me at various points in my life. Peter is able to stand in the middle of the town square and say exactly who this Jesus was and is. He is able to proclaim Christ crucified, but not just Christ crucified, but Christ crucified and risen. Peter is able to proclaim certainty of faith in Christ, not the uncertainty that leaves him suddenly aware that he has denied Christ three times as the cock crows.

Peter has become a man possessed. And I don't mean possessed like in a horror film. Peter's life is no longer his own. Peter now knows what it is to be a child of God, what it is to be a Christian (even though he never would have used that word), what it is to be *Petros*, the rock upon which Christ will build his church. For in this moment, in the power of Pentecost, in the power of what you and I might never think possible if we stopped reading the story on Good Friday, Peter knows the power of God. Peter knows both his importance and his total lack of importance in the story of creation. And he comes to grips with that. Peter is able to finally simply be Peter, the rock upon which Christ's church is built and not the reason for the church or the center of the church, but somehow invaluable to the building of the church.

In the coming of the Spirit, Peter is able to be his best self. Peter is set free to be the person, the human, the creation that God originally created to be. He is no longer afraid. He is no longer scared, he is no longer concerned about anything but the Gospel of God made real in his life in Jesus Christ and truly revealed in his life through the working of the Spirit on this day, 50 days after the resurrection.

And that is our hope for these 6 youth as well. That is our hope for each and every person who comes to this church, to any church and is thirsty. Our hope, grounded in the promise and possibilities of Pentecost, is for each and every person to be set free in Christ through the workings of the Spirit. Our hope, is for every person who feels unable to say, "Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ,"

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to have their life transformed through the power of God to where they can stand in the marketplace, where they can stand in their homes, in the public forums of their lives and say what it what they believe. Christ's invitation is for all who are thirsty to come and drink of his living waters. Our invitation, as the church of Jesus Christ, is to be those people who stand in the public forums, who stand in the legislature who stand in the streets and in the neighborhoods and speak to the power of god made real. To be the people set free for sin, fear, death and doubt to become those who speak the Gospel of Jesus Christ made real in their lives, in our lives, for all the world to see.

This day we welcome 6 more who have been called by God to be a part of the body of Christ; who have been called to speak to their faith in joy and celebration, in power and truth. The power of Pentecost is the power of what could be in many ways. But in many more, it is the promise of what **will be** through the power of God unleashed on the earth through the presence of the Spirit. Take a look around, and ask yourself, what is it that God can't do with this, his body? Take a look around, and see a new congregation of Peter's, the rocks on which Christ build his Church.