

What Does the Spirit Provoke?

Sermon Notes for June 4 2017 at Brentwood



Ps 104:24-34 & Acts 2:1-21

**In the last days, it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.
(Acts 2:17)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- I continue to be fascinated, as I ponder the Scriptures each week in preparation for our Sunday morning worship encounters with Jesus Christ, how much deeper our understanding of the passages becomes when we consider the Old Testament references and contexts – the people for whom these Scriptures were originally written knew their Old Testaments much better than most of us – they saw the stories of God’s tortured relationship with his covenant people told in the Hebrew Scriptures as their story, the framework within which they lived and understood their significance and their call to participate in God’s work in this world – even as Luke, in his gospel and in Acts, introduces them to God’s widening of his pursuit of a covenant people, partners in his mission of reconciling and redeeming the whole of creation, the Hebrew story of God’s commissioning with the Jews remains central - let me highlight two aspects of this in our Pentecost passage this morning
- First, the surprising ability of the assembled multitude to speak in the native languages of others is a reversal of God’s judgement at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), where human rebellion against our limitations was curtailed by a confusion of native languages – people were scattered and divided, unable to understand each other and come together in blessing each other – the curse of Babel remains very much a part of our world today – the gift and ongoing promise of Pentecost is that, in Christ, these divisions are overcome and we are reconciled with God, with each other, and with the selves God created us to become – this is the gift of the Commonwealth of God into which we are invited and enabled to grow
- Second, the flames of fire descending from heaven at Pentecost bring healing, reconciliation, community, capacity to bless the creation – in the book of the prophet Joel, from which Peter quotes in his sermon, those flames come down in anger and destruction, punishment for the faithlessness of Israel – this judgement of God is very different – it is the judgement of love and forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation – all generations are gifted with prophetic visions and dreams – through Joel, God promises health, prosperity, and reconciliation

Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
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At this point in our ponderings, then ...

What the Holy Spirit calls forth (provokes), then, is seen most clearly in the human authenticity that we see in the life and witness of Jesus, the Christ, the One in whom God took flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, to model the way into God's commonwealth – what the Spirit called forth in Jesus was love of God, love of others, and love of self – the same Spirit calls forth the same gifts of love in us – it is a love that casts out fear, that fires us with the courage to live God's love in every one of our circles of influence – this is what it means to be flourish as a friend and follower of Jesus