

**Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church**

**Sun, May 13, 2018 – Ascension Sunday/Mothers' Day**

**What Do We Get?  
(Psalm 47 & Acts 1:1-11)**



**But you will receive power  
when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;  
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,  
in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.  
(Acts 1:8)**

**The story line of our passage/ text**

The story of the early church begins with Jesus leaving – going away – in some miraculous, scientifically incomprehensible way, disappearing from ordinary human sight – but the core affirmation of the Christian faith, the deep and nourishing experience that billions of Christians down through the ages and around the world have staked their lives on, is that Jesus remains with us, nurturing us constantly to become part of his mission in the world through the work of the Holy Spirit – and assuring us of the family's attentive love and support as we grow into our full stature as friends of God and siblings of Jesus Christ – the beginning of Acts is the inauguration of this final phase of God's story of reconciling/redeeming the world to align its evolution to God's original intent – the work of Jesus continues in the work of the Spirit – to know what the Spirit will do for us, to know what we get out of this reconciliation with God, then we look to Jesus and what people got out of his physical presence in their midst -

**Provocative Points to Ponder**

- Our text this morning makes it clear that we get the power of the Holy Spirit – and that power will make us witnesses – we live as heirs of this grace – passed on from generation to generation since this promise was made as Jesus moved on to another plane, dimension, form of existence and, as we will celebrate and explore next week, the Holy Spirit came as promised – I don't really know how to put words to it – living face-to-face with God – in God's inexhaustible mothering/parenting care – for today's service, I'll go 'old school' and talk about 'mothering' – drawing on some of those wonderful Biblical metaphors for the mothering care of God's love – protecting us like a hen and pushing us out of the nest, instinctively knowing we are ready, like an eagle
- My early memories of Mothers' Day are all related to Nana – my Mom's Mom – the only grandparent I really knew – both grandfathers had died long before I came along and my Dad's Mom died when I was a year old – and I remember having flowers from Nana's garden pinned on my lapel – red because my Mom was alive – Dad had white because his Mom has died – but they were a symbol of gratitude for their continuing presence and influence – and that's the key point, it seems to me – to be gratefully aware of their ongoing care for our ongoing growth

- But growth into what? – our faith, if it be true to the way Jesus modeled the way, is focused on God’s intention for God’s creation – we are part of a much larger reality – an essential part, but still only a part – this is not simply about us and what we get to possess – this is about what God is doing and how we get to participate – because its in that participation that we will find the fullest growth into who we are created to be
- What we get to do, according to our text this morning, is to witness – we explored some rich meaning for that world in our Word to Ponder time just before the sermon – lots of great ideas to build on there – for me, as I was doing the notes for this sermon, they key aspect of witness that arose in my soul was this – ***we get the power and opportunities to give evidence of God’s nurturing love*** – that act of witnessing happens through the whole person – through every dimension of your being – the ways you show up in relationships doing justice and being kind with deep humility
- As you go out from this time together, in worship, learning, and fellowship, you go out to serve this mission – more awareness, more attention to this calling will deepen your participation in it – you will grow in your power to be witnesses to the grace of God best revealed in Jesus Christ and present in power among us through the work of the Holy Spirit – that mothering protection and pushing that provokes us to take wing and fly

## Your Notes

**Prayers of Thanks** – for the gift of your Spirit – for its rich diversity of influences in our lives, but especially this morning how it protects and pushes us to be our best, then even better – and deepen our gratitude for all those who mother into your desire for our flourishing - (silence to consider this)

**Prayers for Help** – for al the mothers in this world who agonize over the trauma their children absorb on a daily basis – help them find in you the resilience to witness to the reality and power of a free and fearless love – keep them all in our prayers – bring us further and further into your alliance of agents working for your Commonwealth - (silence to consider this)

**Prayers for Awe** – the adventure of learning that comes from being attentive to and aligned with the power of your love - (silence to consider this)