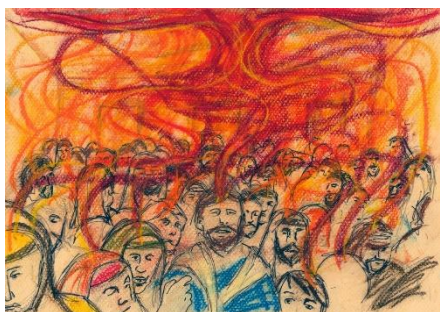


Brian's Sermon Text at Collaborating Churches Worship

Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020

How Are Presbyterians Pentecostal?

(Ps 104:24-35 and Acts 2:1-13)



**All were amazed and perplexed,
saying to one another,
“What does this mean?”
(Acts 2:12)**

This is not the sermon I imagined preaching today.
It is the text, from the story, I chose a few weeks ago.
But the Spirit took me to a deeper level and broader scope
of understanding the faith of the early church
recorded by Luke at the beginning of Acts
in my composing of what you are about to hear.

Confronting both the speaking and the listening this morning
are the continuing perplexities of the pandemic
and the frightening rage of the protests.

I don't claim to understand either dynamic.

They confuse and discourage me.

I know that the information that we get so steadily
through various media channels
is focused on the sensational and the negative.

I know there is much more to these stories –
the peaceful protesters, the public safety people
who are really dedicated to serving and protecting,
the volunteers who come to clean up and rebuild,
the healers of bodies, minds, and souls,
the neighbours who generate community
one caring conversation after another.

These people are all,
however they may identify themselves currently,
the heirs of Pentecost.

Their care is inspired and infused by
the forgiving and reconciling love of the triune God
that amazed and perplexed the nations that day.

And we are kin with them,
relations in this intricate web of interdependence that is God's world.

The meaning of Pentecost,
in all of the variations of significance that arise
from such a powerful origin story,
has to do with the missioning of the church
as a vehicle for the continuation of the work of collaborative creation care
that God's initiated with the first breath that animated humanity.

Denying that breath to George Floyd
was yet another act of rebellion, in a long line of such acts,
against God's intent.

And the meaning of Pentecost, amazing and perplexing as it is,
is that we are forgiven and reconciled
so that we can have blessing breathed into the whole world
through our words and deeds with every breath we enjoy.

One of the most common things that we do with that breath
is converse.

We converse with God, with others, and with ourselves.
That's what the Spirit enables at Pentecost - conversations

But what's amazing and perplexing about these conversations
is that they break down boundaries and barriers.

They break through barriers of language.

They cross boundaries of place and race.

They generate a new kinship
focused on the inspiration and influence
of the triune God's forgiving and reconciling love
in every dimension of life throughout the whole world.

Think of the conversations we are having
within and among our collaborating congregations,
with the diversity of places and races of origin we enjoy
all for the sake of mutual support and strengthening
of our missioning in our respective neighbourhoods.

Think of the conversations we are having in our missioning
with people in need of care and stimulation for their children
in our Christian Urban Camps,
in the conversations we are beginning to have
as people pick up food for their families,
in the conversations we are having with potential donors
to that form of blessing in our communities,

in the conversations we are having about new facilities
that are designed to build a better life together,
in conversations with musicking communities that are caught up in fears
that many of their previous venues for performing
will disappear as things shake out after the pandemic,
in conversations about how to be church in a neighbourhood
that anticipates 40,000 new residents in the next 20 years.
These are rich and rewarding conversations
guided by the same Spirit that disrupted and delighted people at Pentecost.

But let me conclude by linking all of this Pentecostal activity to Canadian Presbyterians.

In our most recently adopted subordinate standard,
Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief (1984),
We state that the central affirmation, the great truth, of our faith
is that God was in Christ forgiving and reconciling the world to God
and that we are ambassadors (*presbeuos*) of that message.
Ambassadors do their work through conversations.
They are conversations in which we welcome the world.
They are conversations in which we wonder at God's welcome.
They are conversations in which we explore God's gracious wisdom.
They are conversations in which we consider how best to response to that love
in ways that carry its impact into every encounter we have in our lives

The whole world is forgiven and reconciled to its Creator.
The original intent of companionship in blessing
is being completed in and for all peoples.
The reality of that energy
- let's imagine it as wind and fire –
has filled us and transformed us.
God is with us,
strengthening our souls,
casting out our fears,
filling us with the justice, kindness, and humility
that will compose the welfare of the city
to which we have been sent.
We are agents of that composing,
ambassadors of the redemption of the whole world.
And in its welfare we will find out own.

My Notes

My Prayers

Note: This sermon was preached at a joint service with four Presbyterian churches in New Westminster and Burnaby – St. Aidan’s, Gordon, Knox, and Brentwood. We followed their order of worship in which they did the prayers of the people. We did not do the Word(s) to Ponder in this service. The following week we returned to our own flow of worshiping at Brentwood. We continue, however, to have conversations with these congregations about how we can be of mutual support in our respective neighbourhoods.