

*Pentecost: An Empowered Community
of Belonging*

*“Open Your Eyes, Make A New
Promise: You Are Empowered By
Community!”*

Acts 2:1-21

September 20, 2020

Summer Rerun of May 31, 2020
Pentecost

Before Acts:

We hear a familiar story to some...the story of how the spirit came upon each of the men and women gathered after Jesus death and ascension in the upper room. An experience of the spirit that brought them to a new understanding.

Now they are made able to be self-reflective, able to go deep to understand each other...the Spirit giving the ability to express in a way others can understand...and the ability to listen to others to grasp the meaning beneath the surface of their words.

And, so, there came through this new understanding...a deeper sense of caring and belonging:

the birth of the church as beloved
community.

As the story begins, the Spirit first came to those gathered in that room, but the commotion was heard outside and a large crowd gathered and then experienced the same Spirit...wondering what is going on? How are we made able to understand, be understood?

Peter assures them...through the words of the prophet Joel, that as foretold, all shall be able to understand, all shall prophesy and vision and dream...we are all made able.

Together, we are one. All things are possible.

Before Poem:

Today, I want to do my best to bring some new images, metaphors to our Pentecost conversation.

The images of fire and wind often shape our hearing of Pentecost. I would like to bridge those with some new metaphors that empower us to be that new beloved community of self-awareness and understanding. ...a self-awareness that reshapes our understanding and choices...our promises to be newly human.

Told in the poem I am about to read, the voice of the world, Holiness, speaks to us. Holiness reminds us life is not in the past or the future...but right now.

So, open your eyes and speak. As you do, you become as Moses...in the desert...smitten by the Holiness of the ground on which he stands as the burning bush calls him to a new purpose and understanding.

Pentecost calls us to open, fall in love with solid ground on which we stand (that truth beneath the surface of things) and reassess our devotions...reassess the promises of our lives that need reassessing...

to break ones made from the heart but that no longer serve us well...and to make new promises that honor a new understanding found in this season of our lives...

a new, realigned commitment to be that new human being
Christ invites us to become....over and over again as we start again.

We are a New Humanity...more that trying, promising our best. This is holy.

Again, think “promise” as metaphor...not your wedding vows, more than your best effort, a recommitment to the needs of this moment.

The Opening of Eyes, excerpts, adapted, David Whyte

That day I heard the voice of the world speak out,
I knew then, as I had before,
life is no passing memory of what has been
nor the remaining pages in a great book
waiting to be read.

Life is the opening of eyes long closed.
It is the heart after years
of secret conversing
speaking out loud in the clear air.
It is the close vision of far off things.

The voice speaks out and in the opening of my eyes...
I am the Moses in the desert
fallen to his knees before the lit bush,
throwing away his shoes
as if to enter heaven.

He finds himself astonished,
opened at last,
fallen in love with that holy ground.
I open my eyes and fall in love with this new life,
my holy ground.

Like Saul to Paul...
Old promise now broken.
New promise freely spoken.

Pentecost. It's about opening our eyes. It's about letting old promises and ways of thinking and being...*go...if they no longer serve us well.*

We are called to open our eyes and break old promises that didn't play out as we had hoped or are no longer timely.

We are called to allow ourselves a new vision which invites us to make a new promise...individually and as Beloved Community. This is exactly how the new blessed normal comes to be!

We are no longer called to measure ourselves by our old promises which reflect the "standards" of the former thought world...rather than the world as it is right before our very eyes, right now...flames upon our heads!

You see, it's not just that the Bible tells us so...
to keep thinking and growing and engaging.

It's we deeply know...promises have seasonality
and need to change with each new season of our lives.

...the promise you made to your newborn to always keep them safe changes as you realize you cannot honor it in the same way as first intended as they live into the season of their tween years.

You cannot truly always keep them safe. As you open your eyes to this, you know that the initial promise now has become a promise to be "broken" SO a new promise can be spoken that honors this season of parenting.

Perhaps the new promise is you are there for them as they make their own choices. Not safe, but there. We now know we cannot keep them safe in the ways we may wish!

A promise made in one season of your life may no longer serve you or others very well in the current season.

People, needs, seasons change. Understanding and faithfulness flows...and Beloved Community grows.

Let go of that old promise that is no longer life-giving.

Give a powerful new meaning to breaking such a promise.

One that honors this moment's awareness and needs.

As individuals but also as the "church".

We are to let go of the ways we see the roles we play in our daily lives, as church in the community. ...to let a "new self" emerge in this new season for a whole new reason.

Just as in the stories of our faith, understandings evolve,
and so our promises need to evolve.

Life flows like a river...life moves on.

As you are seeing it, it is already gone...for the next moment arrives that quickly.

The next moment...now full of possibility and promise.
It is a new moment calling for a new promise.

Eyes open, can you see it?

Let the old promise go with the river.
Let the living waters be wisdom for a new promise in this season of life.

Have faith. It is a new season and it brings deep understanding.

And, like Jesus, your new promise, new humanity, will expose your own vulnerability.

But that very vulnerability becomes the foundation of our new humanity.

Risk nothing, gain nothing.

Newly understanding, eyes open, old promises broken, truly vulnerable, we find our true power.

Pentecost invites us to break old ways of thinking and being...to break old promises.

Pentecost invites us to open our eyes and accept what has changed; to embrace the wisdom made possible by this new truth as we come together in the Spirit of Truth.

Pentecost would have us understand there is no other way to be alive other than to resist our usual ways

as we deeply come understand each other,
willing to be vulnerable if that's what it takes
to be that new human.

Pentecost makes us able as individuals and the "church" to make new promises the likes of which the world has not known before.

Like those who gathered 2020 years ago, turn your face toward truth and holiness...with a flame upon your head.

You stand on Holy Ground.

You do understand.
Your eyes are open.
Yes, you will be vulnerable but therein lays your deepest power.

Again, we know it's true. Listen again.

So often, the promise once made no longer carries much promise. Perhaps that old promise, made with pure, good intention, now confines you or the other or a chosen goal or God's church.

And yet, we hang on to old promises...for they are familiar, routines are practiced around them. They hold us in place giving us a false sense of security and purpose.

And it takes a lot of energy and understanding and courage to choose to be vulnerable and think it all through again...and make that new promise.

But Jesus, the Spirit of Truth, God, our faith invite us...to do exactly that...to be vulnerable to new thinking!

To risk, resist. To be the church.

It is by embracing our very vulnerability we find our true identity.

Don't over ride it as the world would have you do.
Embrace it. In your vulnerability is your new wisdom.

You are empowered, flame upon your head...now seeing the flames on the each other's heads...all other's heads.

-The greatest miracle of Pentecost is understanding...and which is not our thinking alike but about appreciating the power of our differences.

-The miracle of Pentecost is the power unleashed within the people's spirit to care about themselves as they understand/care about each other...the greater, common good in this season.

-The miracle of Pentecost is that you are released from old promises that keep you stuck in place.

So dream dreams and see visions. Truly love your truer self.

Give up old promises and the way you've always seen yourself.

Step into the difficult invitation of becoming vulnerable to new understandings and new promises.

Together, eyes open and old promises broken
so new promises are made,
we belong to a powerful new community of Humanity:
the Church.

We are...one, one universal new humanity made up of grandmothers, grandfathers,
mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, new born babies!

*To hear Pastor Karen sharing the prompting and respond:
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