

In a Manner of Speaking

Pentecost, Year C – Acts 2:1-21

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, May 15, 2016

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Unless the eye catch fire,
The God will not be seen.
Unless the ear catch fire
The God will not be heard.
Unless the tongue catch fire
The God will not be named.
Unless the heart catch fire,
The God will not be loved.
Unless the mind catch fire,
The God will not be known.

William Blake – Pentecost

(Sung)

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
and lighten with celestial fire.
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
who dost thy seven-fold gifts impart.
Thy blessed unction from above
is comfort, life, and fire of love.

That through the ages all along,
this may be our endless song:
praise to thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Hymn 503

what does it mean?
this howling wind?
this sound of dust?
this courtyard scene of rushing men?
this rude awakening from rest
and memories of God?
what does it mean?
these laughing men
with shining face
and weakened knee?

will they tell our stories now?
will they don the robes of priests?
will they tell our stories now

from the lips of foreigners?
 what does it mean?
 this language game?
 this teenage stunt?
 this sound of blowing
 life and death?

how dare they tell our stories well?
 how dare they speak our language well?
 how can they speak our language well?
 how dare they tell our stories as theirs?
 Something has ended and begun
 and the dust will not settle today.

Andrew Jones – The Sound of Dust

(Wearing a red nose) One bright Sunday afternoon little Becky rode her bike over to St. Swithin's to meet her friends for First Communion class. Fr. Tim saw that she seemed reluctant. "Come on inside now, Becky," he said, "everyone else is here and it's time to start our class." Becky still looked a little troubled. "But somebody might steal my bike." Fr. Tim looked around, and then helped Becky secure the bike to a post. "Don't worry," he said, "the Holy Spirit will watch it."

They had a good class that concluded with the children learning to make the Sign of the Cross. After some initial instruction from Fr. Tim, each of the children came forward to demonstrate: "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen." "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen." Finally, it was Becky's turn. "In the name of the Father and the Son, Amen." Becky frowned as the other children giggled, and Fr. Tim turned to the little girl, "What happened to the Holy Spirit?" "Oh, Father," Becky said, nearly in tears, "he's outside, watching my bike."

Listen sweet Dove unto my song,
 And spread thy golden wings in me;
 Hatching my tender heart so long,
 Till it get wing, and flie away with thee.

Where is that fire which once descended
 On thy Apostles? thou didst then
 Keep open house, richly attended,
 Feasting all comers by twelve chosen men.

Such glorious gifts thou didst bestow,
 That th' earth did like a heav'n appeare;
 The starres were coming down to know
 If they might mend their wages, and serve here.

The sunne, which once did shine alone,
 Hung down his head, and wisht for night,
 When he beheld twelve sunnes for one
 Going about the world, and giving light.

But since those pipes of gold, which brought
 That cordiall water to our ground,
 Were cut and martyr'd by the fault
 Of those, who did themselves through their side wound,

Thou shutt'st the doore, and keep'st within;
 Scarce a good joy creeps through the chink:
 And if the braves of conqu'ring sinne
 Did not excite thee, we should wholly sink.

Lord, though we change, thou art the same;
 The same sweet God of love and light:
 Restore this day, for thy great name,
 Unto his ancient and miraculous right.

George Herbert - Whitsunday

I had a very interesting sort of father-son chat earlier this week. As I think most of you know by now, my younger son, Kyle is finishing up very soon now at Virginia Theological Seminary, my *alma mater*, in preparation for being ordained a priest. He's been calling Jenny or I a lot here lately, what with getting ready for his graduation this week, and his wedding *next* week, and still involved in several search processes, one of which we fervently hope will issue in a call – *soon*, please. Anyway, he's been calling a lot lately, but the other day, my conversation with him turned to the fact that we are both preaching this morning. I was particularly intrigued when Kyle said he was thinking of including some poetry in his sermon. "After all," he reasoned, "isn't Pentecost about the Holy Spirit being really creative?" We had the kind of talk that I suppose is only found when a parent and child share a common vocation, and at least *this* dad found it grand indeed.

As it turns out, since Kyle is sharing the pulpit this morning with the other seminarian at Immanuel Church, Alexandria, he was persuaded to go in another direction. "Shut down on the poem idea," his text said, with the little frowny-face emoji. "Oh well, I'll just do it next time." But I *still* think it's a good idea.

Today we feel the wind beneath our wings
 Today the hidden fountain flows and plays
 Today the church draws breath at last and sings
 As every flame becomes a Tongue of praise.
 This is the feast of fire, air, and water
 Poured out and breathed and kindled into earth.
 The earth herself awakens to her maker
 And is translated out of death to birth.
 The right words come today in their right order
 And every word spells freedom and release
 Today the gospel crosses every border
 All tongues are loosened by the Prince of Peace
 Today the lost are found in His translation.
 Whose mother-tongue is Love, in every nation.

Malcom Guite – The Mother Tongue is Love

"And how is it," the astonished crowd said the first time they heard the Good News that Pentecost morning, "how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and Libya and Cyrene –in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." "All were amazed and perplexed," the record of the Acts of the Apostles tells us, "saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'"

St. Francis of Assisi once said, "Go out and preach the Gospel – and if you must, use words." Today, and every day, day by day, let us each invite the Holy Spirit to fill us with the fire of the Gospel of

Christ's love, for us and for all those around us. Let us each trust the Holy Spirit to put us in the lives of people that need to hear that Gospel, who need to *experience* that Good News. And let us each use *whatever* language we have been given – every word, every rhythm, every tone, every action, every silly red nose – let us each use whatever language we have been given, to tell them, and to tell them, and to tell them, that the God of love loves *all* of us, that the God of love loves *each* of us, enough to be *one* of us.

And now perhaps just one more, a favorite of mine that many of you have heard before. This from Emily Dickinson isn't about Pentecost or the Holy Spirit, but about how we hear the Truth. So, maybe it *is* about the Holy Spirit. Maybe it *is* about Pentecost.

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
 Success in Circuit lies
 Too bright for our infirm Delight
 The Truth's superb surprise
 As Lightning to the Children eased
 With explanation kind
 The Truth must dazzle gradually
 Or every man be blind —

Emily Dickinson - Tell all the truth but tell it slant

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!*