

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Pentecost Sunday Gospel Word
John 20:19-23

Every year we recall the dramatic coming of the Holy Spirit to the scared and worried followers of Jesus. That was their “break-out” moment. They opened the doors and announced to everyone that they believed that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that God had designed a new world.

Are you surprised to learn that there are two, yes, two Pentecostal events in the New Testament? The event most commonly referred to happened some fifty days after Easter. The other one happened on Easter night. That’s the one described in today’s Gospel reading. It’s toned down some, not nearly as dramatic as the one with the “fireworks.”

Both accounts underscore the arrival of God’s Spirit in the followers of Jesus. By implication that includes all of us. The tone of today’s Gospel reading emphasizes the importance of forgiveness. This is the centerpiece of Jesus’ mission. He announced that our God was a God of mercy and forgiveness. While sin separates us from God, God does not let sin have the final word. Like the Prodigal Son’s father, God is bent on forgiving us, and bringing us back into a deep, loving relationship with God.

At this “other” Pentecost, the followers of Jesus are given the charge of bringing God’s forgiveness to others. Yes, it’s about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but also about everyday forgiveness that we pray for when we recite the Our Father. We are to be forgiving persons who bring peace and harmony to each other. God so longs for us to enjoy this. All of us have sinned. All of us need God’s forgiveness. Being called to be imitators of God’s love, we are invited to extend forgiveness whenever we can, so that what is done in heaven will also be done on earth.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

Pentecost signaled the beginning of their ministry as disciples of Jesus. He was in charge until then, and now it was their turn to walk and talk like Jesus. They were inspired and literally spirited by God. The comparison to tongues of fire indicated that they were “on fire” with enthusiasm and love of God for humanity’s sake.

It was time to get busy, to step out in faith and to tell of the wondrous deeds that God had done in and through Christ Jesus. They could confirm that Jesus was now risen and alive and present in them – and in all Christians from that time into the future. It was not business as usual. Everything had changed.

Prayer

Spirit of God, give me a forgiving heart. Amen.