

“All in One Place”

Acts 2: 1-21

You would think I have learned by now that the Holy Spirit moves and has a different sense of timing than I do. I thought I had everything ready for this morning last night only to wake up to the Spirit’s nudging, giving me a new word. This new word came in light of Saturday evening’s attacks in London. London, a city that is diverse in race, culture, ethnicity, London, a city that is grounded in history and tradition. London, a city in which its people find themselves facing a new reality, facing a choice...Do they live in fear of the other or do they have the strength, the courage to come together, all in one place, living together as brothers and sisters, not letting death and darkness have the last word?

It is too soon after the attacks to know the answers to these questions. Already there are indications that the people of London will figure out how to come together and support one another as they begin to process this tragedy. But as I read the reports of what happened in London, I couldn’t help but think that this tragedy is an indication of all the brokenness and hurt that fills our world. Brokenness and hurt that threatens to divide us, brokenness and hurt that tears at the very fabric of our humanity. Brokenness and hurt that prevents us, all of us, from coming together as the Beloved Community God first envisioned for God’s people all those years ago.

I say this because, like the people of London, as people of faith, we are also facing a new reality, we are also facing a choice, a choice that will affect how we live our lives, a choice that will shape our decisions and our actions...As people of faith, as we encounter more and more of the brokenness and hurt that fills our world, we have a choice laid out before us...Do we live in fear of the other or do we have the strength, the courage to come together, all in one place, living together as brothers and sisters, not letting death and darkness have the last word?

I know how the world wants us to answer this question. But as a person of faith, I don't take my cues from the world. I take my cues from the story, God's story, which tells me time and time again, love and light will overcome any darkness that we might face. And as I have lived with the Pentecost story this week, I have been reminded of this fundamental piece of our faith story again and again.

Here's why I say this: As we look at our text this morning, we are told during the Feast of Pentecost, they were all together in one place. Now to give us all a little bit of church history, we need to know that the Feast of Pentecost didn't start with the disciples. It was a part of the story of God long before the disciples ever gathered in that upper room.

The Feast of Pentecost was a time when people gathered to celebrate the fifty days after the first harvest. It was a time to celebrate God's abundance. It was

a time to celebrate God at work in this world, providing for, caring for, supplying the needs of God's people. So it should be no surprise that as the disciples gathered to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, God intended to do all this and more.

Here they were, the disciples all together in one place, not knowing who they could trust, not knowing what their next steps would be, Here they were, waiting in the upper room, afraid of what was outside of their walls. And really who could blame them? Fifty days before, they had watched the powers that be arrest Jesus, falsely accuse him and then crucify him as a political prisoner.

That was not what they signed up for when they agreed to follow Jesus. They had hoped that this man would overthrow the powers that be, that this Jesus, would bring in a new world order where of course, the disciples would be in charge. When the disciples agreed to be followers of Jesus, they had hoped Jesus would make everything right again. As the disciples gathered in the upper room, they were afraid, not wanting to face this new reality, a new reality that would take them out of their comfort zones. A new reality that would have them engaging and encountering the other, you know the people society wanted to ignore or at least pretend that they didn't exist. In that upper room, the disciples were afraid to face this new reality because it would challenge them to come together as the living breathing Body of Christ here on Earth, working together to bring healing and wholeness for all of God's children.

During that Feast of Pentecost all those years ago, the Spirit began moving and shaping the disciples. The Spirit of God shattered the disciples' expectations. It moved them beyond their fears, bringing forth new life. In that moment, during the Feast of Pentecost, a time to celebrate God's continued work in this world, there was a new wind of Creation stirring. There began a fire for justice burning within the hearts of each of these disciples. There began a new understanding of what it meant to live in community, to live as community, all together in one place, as Beloved Children of God.

During that Feast of Pentecost all those years ago, a new period of promise and passion began for all the people of God. In that upper room, the breath of God formed a new community of the people of God. A community for the whole people of God: young and old, male and female, Jew and Gentile. At that moment The Spirit of God was poured out on all flesh giving the disciples the strength and the courage to come together, all in one place, to be the living breathing real Body of Christ, this world needed them to be.

On that day, the disciples' eyes were opened to what God was already doing in their community. In that moment, everything changed. No longer would fear drive their decisions. No longer would they stay confined behind these walls. Now they understood that it was a time to move forward into a new way of being, into a

new way of doing, into a new reality of the Kingdom of God here on earth, just like it does for us today.

Through the sending of the Holy Spirit then and now, God is breaking into our lives and saying, Faith is not passive. Faith is active. Faith is grounded in a passion for all of God's people, for all of God's creation. Then and now, God is saying The day of the Lord has come. Now is the time for young and old to dream new dreams. Now is the time for sons and daughters to prophesy. Now is the time for us as ones who follow a Risen Savior to proclaim that Love and light will always overcome any darkness we may face.

For us as people of faith, the Feast of Pentecost is not just a day we celebrate. It represents how we will live out our faith as ones filled with God's Spirit, as ones who have a passion and love for all of God's people. The Feast of Pentecost is a way of being for us. It centers us and reminds us that God is at work in our world now and always.

Just like for the disciples all those years ago, the Feast of Pentecost represents a new beginning for us. It represents our very active faith as we make the choice to face this new reality with courage and strength, letting nothing silence our voices of hope, our voices for justice, our voices for reconciliation ever again. Today, as people of faith, as ones filled with God's Spirit, we are no longer letting fear shape our decisions. We are no longer allowing the world to tell us

what we can and cannot do. Instead, we are celebrating. We are celebrating the fact that we know, we know we serve a God who is powerful and mighty. We serve a God who has called us to follow a living Savior who came to show us a new way of being, a new way of being in community, a new way of being together all in one place. During this Feast of Pentecost, we are celebrating our God, a God who has given us the courage and the strength to be the living Breathing Body of Christ, working to bring healing and wholeness for all of God's people.

Today, as we gather all in the once place, we are opening ourselves to the wind of the new creation. Today we are asking God to sweep over us, to turn our dry as dust lives and faith into a new being, into a new passion, into a new mission for the Kingdom of God. Today, we are celebrating and embracing this new reality, knowing that we have nothing to fear. We know our God is at work in this world, providing for us, caring for us, supply for all our needs just like God has done since the beginning of time. As people of faith, now filled with the Holy Spirit, we are living in God's amazing grace!

All week, as I've thought about this service, and prepared this sermon, a certain phrase has gone through my mind. It is a phrase that is very dear to our Disciples of Christ' hearts because it sums up our faith like nothing else really. You see, in the Disciples tradition, we don't say creeds. We don't recite belief statements. Yet, although we might not have traditional faith statements per se,

we do have a motto of sorts. And that motto is “In essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty and in all things, charity.” Now I have a confession to make. I always thought that one of our Disciples of Christ’s founders came up with this statement, that it was uniquely our’s. But much to my surprise, I discovered this week, that I was wrong. In fact, lots of denominations claim this statement as uniquely theirs. This statement has been attributed to St. Augustine, John Wesley, among other notable people. Heck, since there is so much confusion on who actually said it, I might even get in on taking credit for saying it.

No one really knows exactly who said this formative statement for so many followers of Jesus Christ. There is so much research and guesses about this particular quote but according to the experts, and by experts, I mean the Internet, but according to the experts, it seems like this quote came about after a particular turbulent time in Church history.

It was after the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), a bloody time in European history in which religious tensions played a significant role. It is probably a safe bet for us to think that again, during this period, the followers of Christ were facing a new reality, were facing a choice that would shape how they lived out their faith. It is probably a safe bet for us as modern day disciples to again think that followers of Jesus were asking themselves... Do we live in fear of the other or do we have

the strength, the courage to come together, all in one place, living together as brothers and sisters, not letting death and darkness have the last word?

Of course, we can probably tell from church history that this question never really gets answered. Throughout the years, we as people of faith, go through periods of time where we think we are doing things right, living out our call like Jesus asked us to do, only to lose track of what should guide us time and time again. The only thing we do know for certain is that the time span that separates us a modern day disciples from the Feast of Pentecost found in the Books of Acts continues to expand yet it seems we always come back to the same question... How do we come together as God's Beloved Community?

I don't know about you but I like to think that someone way smarter than me had it all figured out when he said, In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty and in all things charity. Because maybe just maybe, one day we will quit asking the questions based on fear and instead, ask our God what is required of us. Maybe just maybe as ones who are now filled with the Holy Spirit, we will figure out how to really come together, all in one place, living as brothers and sisters, and proclaim to the world that our God is still at work in this world, bringing healing and wholeness for all of God's children. Maybe just maybe, one day we will become the people God created and called us to be...people of hope, people of love, people

of justice, Maybe just maybe...one day, we will become the living Breathing Body
of Christ this world needs us to be. Amen.