

## “Time to Testify”

### Acts 2: 1-21

I don't normally use words like “testify” when it comes to Sunday morning sermons. It's not that this word isn't part of my vocabulary as a person of faith. It's just that this word “testify” brings forth ideas that are out of my comfort zone. I don't usually testify when I preach. Sure, I can share stories about how God has worked in my life this past week but when it comes to actually testifying, that's when the Type A, logical, planned personality that I claim starts to hyper-ventilate.

But as I discovered this past week, when the Holy Spirit lays upon your heart, “Time to Testify” as the words I am called to bring forward this morning, who am I to question the moving and dealings of the Spirit? Because you see the Holy Spirit was quick to remind me this week that Pentecost is not about my preferences. Pentecost is not about what I am or am not comfortable doing as a disciple of Christ. Pentecost is about really about us, all of us as the people of God testifying, testifying through our words and our deeds, testifying to this world about the amazing life changing works of God.

As I was reminded again this past week, Pentecost is really about the Holy Spirit coming in and shaking us up, coming in and disrupting our preferences,

coming in and reminding us that we are called to tell everyone about the wonderful works of our God. Pentecost is a reminder that the Kingdom of God has never been about us. It has always been about the many ways God continues to work to bring healing and wholeness to God's creation.

You see, what I discovered this past week, was that the Holy Spirit doesn't care about what we are comfortable or not comfortable doing as people of faith. It just swoops in like a mighty gale force wind and changes everything. It just falls on us like tongues of fire, rekindling the light of Christ in our hearts. Our protests about what we prefer to do as people of faith fall on deaf ears when it comes to the Holy Spirit. It blows all of those things away and sends us out to testify to the world about our God.

The Holy Spirit reminds us time and time again, that the Kingdom of God is not about us. The transforming power of the Kingdom of God is about bearing witness to others, telling them of God's redemptive activity in this world.

Just like it did on that First Pentecost morning.

My guess is that although there is nothing written down in our Bibles about it, the disciples were gathered in that upper room on that fateful day, planning. I'm sure the disciples were trying to figure out what their next steps would be. I would also guess that a fair amount of the disciples' conversation that morning circled

around the fact that now Jesus was really gone, they wondered what life would hold for them as Jesus' followers. I imagine that maybe one or more of the disciples thought about going back to the life they knew before their encounter with the Risen Christ. I would also guess that maybe all of them were worried about the future. When suddenly a rush of wind came in and blow all those questions and worries out of the water. When suddenly tongues of fire filled the room and transformed their hearts. And if that wasn't a big enough clue to help them figure out what their next steps should be as disciples of Christ, boom, no ifs ands or buts, the Holy Spirit pushes the disciples out the door.

On that first Pentecost morning, much to the disciples' surprise, the Holy Spirit comes in and creates a very public scene, right there on the streets of Jerusalem for all the world to see. It didn't ask the disciples questions about what was their preferences on how the Gospel message should be shared. Nope, it comes right in, pushes them out the door. It forces them to take the message of God's love out to the streets. In the middle of Jerusalem, for all the world to see, the disciples are right there, testifying to their God, testifying about their God.

What I also love about this story is that this testifying doesn't end with just the disciples. The Holy Spirit goes above and beyond. Suddenly, people outside the upper room were testifying. The crowd gathered began to say, "They are speaking our language, telling us about God's works."

On that first Pentecost morning, there was not a failure to communicate. The message came through loud and clear. Disciples, get out beyond the walls. Go out into the streets and tell all about God's amazing works. And when the disciples hesitated, because, well, we just don't do things like that, The Holy Spirit swoops in and pushes them out the door. It has them sharing the life changing news that life will always overcome death and darkness each and every time through the power of God.

Much to their surprise, the disciples find themselves taking their message to the streets. They find themselves testifying to God's love and God's grace. And what is more amazing than that is that the crowd understands! The disciples begin telling all about the transforming power of the Kingdom of God and the people understood! That day lives were changed! People experienced the transforming life changing life giving love of God, all because the disciples testified to God's works.

Now here is where the doubters begin to speak. In our text we are told, the doubters said the disciples were drunk on wine. Today the doubters just say Well, that was just a story. Or that happened only once. A few doubters would also say that The Holy Spirit wouldn't do that today, you know stir things up, sweep in like gale force winds, bring in tongues of fire while other doubters would even go as far as saying the Holy Spirit isn't doing any of those things nowadays.

To which I say, we as people of faith haven't been paying close enough attention. The Holy Spirit is still moving. The Holy Spirit is still rekindling the fire of Christ in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is still pushing us out the door, pushing us to go out and testify about God's wonderful works.

As people of faith, the message is still coming through loud and clear. We just aren't listening. We've grabbed onto the door jams of our churches and we are holding on tight, so tight that we are leaving fingernail grooves in the wood as the Holy Spirit pulls us out into the streets. Believe me, I know. I've got a few splinters underneath my nails as well. As I said earlier, testifying is uncomfortable for me. It is not something I usually do.

But, but... it is what I am called to do. It is what we are all called to do as people of faith. Our lives speak to God. Our lives speak about God. When we testify through our words and our actions, we become convicted by the life changing power of the Kingdom of God. We cannot and we will not keep silent. Now is the time to testify so that all know about the power and grace of God.

Pastor Rick has been telling me about Second's flooded basement. He shared how this could have been the disaster to bring gloom and doom to these very walls. But the story doesn't end there. Pastor Rick has also told me about the meeting that followed the flood. He shared how everyone began to talk and see that this flood was a blessing in disguise. You see I'm here to tell you that's the work

of the Spirit, moving and shaking things up. Putting our best laid plans aside because they are our plans, not God's plans. God has so much more good things planned for us if we would just put aside our preferences, put aside what we are and are not comfortable doing as people of God and listen. The Holy Spirit is pushing all of us to go out beyond our doors and testify to God's wonderful works.

Now, Midway Christian, don't think I'm talking just to Second Christian Church here. We are in the same boat. Time and time again, I have felt the Spirit stirring. I have felt the Spirit moving and we've squashed it. We didn't listen to where it was calling us because that direction didn't fit into our plans. Well, just as the disciples learned on that first Pentecost morning, the Holy Spirit ignores our plans and does what it wants to do. And right now, it is pushing us out the door, pushing us to take our message out into the streets. The Holy Spirit is pushing us to create a public scene that demonstrates the grace and love of God. How we do it is still to be determined. What matters now is that we testify. We testify through our words, through our actions so that all will understand, so that all will experience the new life found in Christ.

You see, that's the transforming part of the Pentecost story. In their testimonies to Jerusalem, the disciples aren't using big theological language. They aren't using marketing gimmicks to get their message across. They are right there standing on the streets of Jerusalem, testifying to the wondrous works of God. And

because they do so, lives are changed. Lives are transformed. Because the disciples take their message to the street, the world knows once more that God's love and grace has the last word.

The thing we tend to forget is that Pentecost is not just about the birth of the Church. It was and has always also been about us as people of faith, as disciples of Christ us bearing witness to others, telling them of God's redemptive activity in this world. Pentecost has always been a reminder to us that it is time to testify! That is time for us to share the surprising life giving word of God's love and God's grace to all of God's.

We need to realize that the Kingdom of God has never been about us and what we prefer to do as people of faith. It has always, always been about taking our message of God's reconciling mercy to the streets and letting this world know that the one it thought was dead is alive through God's power.

Now is the time for us as the Body of Christ to start living out our calling as Jesus' disciples here on earth. Now is the time to start sharing the good news with rest of the world, a world that is in need of hearing that it is welcomed, that it is loved. Now is the time for us to start saying in words, in actions, so that all the people can understand that they are embraced as children of God. Now is the time to testify to God.

That's what so amazing about this story. It is not just about the Church. It is not just about the disciple sitting in the upper room. This story is about all of God's children, the ones that have heard about God's wondrous works and those who have not. It is a story that shares the message of God's Kingdom. It reminds us that God is doing a new thing. It is a story that says ultimately life is all about God's unconditional grace and love.

Sure, The story starts out with the disciples sitting in the upper room, but it doesn't end there. Suddenly, there comes a mighty wind, rushing in, and begins to shake things up. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit comes in and reminds the disciples what they are called to do here on earth as Jesus' disciples. It gives them a new language. It gives them new words. The Holy Spirit comes in and changes the disciples' focus from their group, from their own wants and needs to getting them to focus on speaking out, loud and proud, about God's wondrous works. It gives the disciples the words to tell about God's grace and God's love so that all of God's children could understand and experience God's wondrous works.

On that first Pentecost morning, The Holy Spirit comes in and changes the disciples' focus from inward to outward focus just like it is doing for us today. Pentecost is about reclaiming our calling as Jesus' disciples, as the Body of Christ here on earth, our calling to talk to anyone who is seeking to know, to talk to anyone who wants to understand, to talk to anyone who wants to experience God's

love and God's grace in their loves. Pentecost is about reminding us that we as Jesus' disciples are called to speak so that all of God's children can understand, so that all of God's children will experience, so that all of God's children will hear that they are welcomed and embraced as God's own, no ifs, ands or buts.

That's what it is all about. That's why we are here. To open ourselves to the Spirit's prompting. To remind ourselves that it is beyond time that we as the Body of Christ here on earth speak out, loud and proud, so that all of God's children understand and experience the realization that we are loved more than we could ever imagine.

That's what being Jesus' disciple is all about. We are called to Testify through our words and our actions to God's wonderful works. We are called to help people experience the transforming power of the Kingdom of God.

As we celebrate Pentecost this year, we are reminded that We are here because someone at some point, told us about God's love in words that we could understand. We are here today, part of the Body of Christ, because someone at some point, showed us the grace of God in actions that changed our lives. We are disciples of Christ because we experienced the life changing, the life transforming, the life giving nature of God and we began to understand the blessings that this knowledge brings. We began to understand the joy that this knowledge brings. We are disciples of Christ here today because at some point,

someone told us the good news that changed our lives forever.

And now it is beyond time that we start sharing that same news, that same experience, that same joy with all of God's children. Now is the time to speak out loud and proud as the Body of Christ here on earth by using words of grace, using words of love, using words of peace so that all of God's creation understands that we are loved more than we could ever imagine.

Now is the time to speak out loud and proud about God's wondrous works. Now is the time to testify!

Amen.