

Pentecost - 5/23/10 – Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 – Fired Up!

The story is told about a church being struck by lightning and catching fire. As people heard the sirens, word spread about the blaze, and people gathered at the scene to watch. While shifting to get a better view, John, an active member of the church, bumped into another man. “Earl,” John said, “I haven’t seen you at our church in a long time.” “Yes,” Earl responded, “you’re right. This is the first time I’ve seen the church on fire!”

Pentecost is about fire, but not the burn-baby-burn type fire. Rather, it’s about getting “fired up”, being passionate about our faith and the mission of the church. It’s about sharing with others where and how we experience God acting in our lives, and giving God’s Spirit an opportunity to touch hearts and lead people into a relationship with Christ and connect with people of faith.

Most of us have never had a wind-blowing, tongues-of-fire, Pentecost experience. Admittedly, it sounds a bit out there; something we might see on the TV series *Fringe* or *Flash Forward*. Let’s not get caught up in the literal language of the text. Rather, let’s look at the truth beneath the words. No two of us experience life in exactly the same way. Our attempts to describe our experiences often miss the mark. The words in our text attempt to tell us about a life transforming event in the life of the disciples. This event – however it happened - transformed them from fear-filled-followers into being literally “fired up” about sharing their experience of Jesus and the Spirit. Notice that they weren’t worried about having the right words. In simple words they gave voice to they had seen and heard.

What are you “fired up” about? To what do you give yourself passionately - with energy, enthusiasm and joy - believing that your personal investment is making a difference? It doesn’t have to be church related, though it could be. Perhaps you’re fired up about supporting children through scouting, caring for a neighbor, or involvement with PTA. It could be delivering Mobile Meals, working in Charlie’s Garden, or serving meals at Urban Ministry. To what are you giving yourself passionately, and how does that add value or purpose to your life? Think about that for a minute; some might like to write it down on your bulletin. Now turn to the person next to you and share.

That wasn’t too difficult was it? You just took the first step in sharing your faith. These areas of excitement and passion are the places we’re most likely to extend an invitation to someone else. It’s not so much about inviting people to come to church as it is inviting people to share an experience. It begins with identifying our passion and excitement; those things that add value to our lives. The second step is looking beneath our everyday experiences to discover Christ’s presence. Christ is alive and at work in our lives. It’s not always obvious. We need to look beneath our experiences to see how God might be acting in. People want to know what our relationship with Christ means to us and how that makes a positive difference in our lives. Haven’t you been touched, comforted or encouraged by someone sharing his or her story with you, especially if that story parallels something you’re going through?

Brian, a quiet CPA, shares this: “It’s hard for me to be outgoing or really friendly like some people. So what I do is pray that God will show me people to pray for who might be open to Christ. When I ask, God brings people to my mind or into my life. Sometimes it’s someone whose child just left for college ... just retired ... lost his job ... or a lady whose husband just died. When their names come into my mind, I call them for lunch or golf. Then I tell them church means a lot to me and helps me. I guess my job is praying and inviting.”

What has God shown you to tell others? What has God told you that you can’t wait to share? Simply tell others what you have seen and heard and you will be an effective witness for God. Where has God’s compassionate love touched your life: the birth of a child, the encouragement of a teacher, or the forgiveness of a friend? How has the community of faith helped you cope with difficult situations: through people who listened, brought you a meal, or stood with you at a grave? What are you fired up about? Tell another person before you leave this morning; talk about it in your cars as you drive home from church. Look for an opportunity to tell your child, a friend or colleague. Share the good news. Invite someone to join you in what brings you joy and meaning. Let the Holy Spirit fire you up and give voice to your story.

