

Pentecost Sunday

Year A

Come Holy Spirit: Saying Yes

[RCL] Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:25-35, 37; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 20:19-23

The disciples were afraid! Their world had come to an abrupt end on a Friday afternoon as their teacher, leader, and friend had died in shame outside the city walls. There was no good news as they scattered from the city in search of safety, security, and something that resembled sanity. The preaching and teaching, traveling and telling seemed for nothing. The miraculous healings and even the raising of Lazarus were distant memories. The peaceful kingdom Jesus preached now lay in ruin, like his body on the cross. The blessing of the poor, the meek, the persecuted, the mournful felt like empty words. The disciples were heartbroken.

But some of their number, following the lead of Mary of Magdala, had gone to the tomb when others couldn't muster the courage to even venture into the garden. The pain of loss was too new. The longing for the past, the good times, offered little comfort. But Mary had brought strange news: Jesus is alive! That cannot be. We saw the soldiers, the slow agonizing march through the city, the nails, and the cries. The news couldn't possibly be true. The disciples were confused. They gathered together behind locked doors to comfort each other, to connect with the familiar, to feel safe. Safety in numbers behind locked doors. The world, the pain, the fear all safely kept at bay on the other side of a lock.

The locks, no matter how carefully crafted, cannot keep resurrection out. Even in this room flooded with memory and saturated with grief, resurrection seeps in. "Peace be with you." Jesus stands in their midst. Flesh and blood and body. Resurrected. Their fear turned to excitement, the locks forgotten because the one lost is alive with the scars to prove it. Look. Touch. It is *really* Jesus. Hope lives.

No matter how carefully barred, not even locked doors can keep the risen Jesus, the Anointed One, out. "Receive the Holy Spirit." The voice is familiar but it resounds with urgency and love. In that moment their lives are transformed. They can no longer hide behind doors frozen by fear, seeking to keep the world out. Jesus is alive, out there, out in the world, hidden in the guise of those in need. Come Holy Spirit.

On Easter evening, the disciples once more gather to find comfort in the familiar. Jesus is ascended. After the walk to Emmaus and breakfast on the shore, his work is now done. Once more, in a house behind closed doors, they gather. A violent wind engulfs the house, filling every corner and crevice. Tongues of flame hover above their heads and unstop their tongues. Out into the world, out from the house, out from behind the doors, out to tell Good News to every nation, tribe, language, and people. Full of new wine? No, filled with God's renewing Spirit. As Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit had come.

On Pentecost, we gather like the disciples behind closed doors. We come with hopes and fears, with doubts and certainties, with pain and joy looking to be transformed, to be resurrected, to be made new. We offer a simple prayer. A prayer that the followers of Jesus have whispered and sung, have shouted and signed: Come Holy Spirit. It is a plea, a prayer to be once more filled with the breath of God that called creation into being, to be replenished to enter the wilderness of doubt and uncertainty.

We whisper, we sing, we shout, we pray, we proclaim, “Come Holy Spirit.”

But do we really want the Holy Spirit to come among us? Jesus, after his Baptism, found himself driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. The wilderness, where things happen, where we are forced to face ourselves laid bare. Do we really want to be filled with that Spirit? The Holy Spirit makes things happen, compels us out into the world to find Jesus present in our sisters and brothers. She opens our eyes to more clearly see Jesus in those we would rather keep at arm’s length, the ones we are more comfortable serving from a distance, from behind the security of locked doors and the safety of a checkbook.

Do we really want to be so filled with the Holy Spirit?

Like the disciples, we the church can sometimes crave the safety of locked doors, locked hearts, and locked minds. Behind locked doors, we can find comfort in the familiar, but if we truly seek to follow Jesus, we know that no locked doors will keep him from appearing in our midst and compelling us out in the world. “The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these,” are words of promise if we are open to the moving of the Spirit in our lives, in our church, in our world. “Come Holy Spirit.”

Our prayer on this day is a dangerous prayer because it means that we must be open and vulnerable, willing to be challenged and changed so that we can seek and find Jesus in the ones we serve. “Come Holy Spirit” means that we must become open to the transforming power of God in our lives. It means that we will find ourselves standing with those on the margins, on the edges, on the outs.

Our simple prayer, “Come Holy Spirit,” is the first step towards saying “yes” to God’s desire in our life of faith. We are called, with the Spirit’s help, to say yes to God!

The question for us is can we say yes to God at work? Can we say yes to stepping out from behind our closed doors and into the deep waters of loving our neighbors? Can we say yes to allowing the locked doors of our hearts and minds to be opened again and again and again?

Edwina Gateley sums up our longing to say yes to God in her poem *Called to say yes*.

*We are called to say yes
So that rich and poor embrace
And become equal in their poverty
Through the silent tears that fall.*

*We are called to say yes
That the whisper of our God
Might be heard through our sirens
And the screams of our bombs.*

*We are called to say yes
To a God who still holds fast
To the vision of the Kingdom
For a trembling world of pain.*

*We are called to say yes
To this God who reaches out
And asks us to share
His crazy dream of love.*

God's crazy dream of love is *our* crazy dream of love. We are called to say "yes" to allow the Spirit of the Living God to fall afresh on us and unlock the doors that keep us from loving our neighbors. God's crazy dream of love calls us to stand with and work for the homeless, the working poor, the outcast, the refugee, the persecuted, the put-down and the putout. Our sisters and brothers, Jesus in disguise, can no longer be simply petitions in our prayers but persons deserving of dignity, justice, and love.

Come Holy Spirit. Yes! Come Holy Spirit. Yes! Come Holy Spirit. Yes! Amen.

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