

**The Reverend Marjo Anderson**

**Pentecost Sunday  
Acts 2.1-21**

**23 May 2021  
Salem, Bridgeport**

**“I Want MORE!”**

In our pastors’ text study this week, the first speaker’s comment about the text was,  
“Well, the first thing we have to ask is, ‘Did this really happen?’”

So I’m going to ask you a multiple-choice question about what YOU believe?

Do you believe this story happened literally?

Do you believe the story is one of symbol and metaphor?

Or do you believe it’s some combination of the two?

In case you’re shy let’s have everybody close their eyes and then I’m going to ask you to raise your hand.

How many think it happened literally?

How many think the story is a metaphor or symbolic?

And how many think the truth is somewhere in between the two?

Interesting!

And what do I, your pastor, believe?

There was certainly a time in my life when I believed everything literally  
because when we’re young that’s the only way we can think, right?

Then there was a time when I believed that everything in the Bible was metaphor & symbol.

And now I have to say that I certainly believe that this story could have happened completely literally,  
and yet I don’t think it all necessarily happened literally.

I’m not sure if there were literally tongues of fire visible on the heads of the disciples, so maybe that part is symbol.

Do I believe there was a great wind? Most definitely!

Since the Spirit of God is the same thing as the breath of God or the wind of God,  
I can easily believe there was a wind.

Do I believe people thought the disciples were drunk? Oh, yeh!

I know how excited I get when the Spirit works,  
and at those times I wouldn’t be surprised if people thought I was drunk!

Do I believe they spoke in other languages, other tongues? Oh I believe there were tongues!

I had somebody pray for me in tongues decades ago.

In recent years I’ve been at plenty of worship services where people have prayed in tongues.

I’ve seen powerful healing take place as people prayed in tongues.

I’ve felt the power of the living God in the atmosphere as people prayed in tongues.

Now the tongues that I have experienced are not the kind of tongues we’re talking about here,  
since these tongues were meant to communicate with people who speak a different language,  
while the tongues that I have experienced are not that (at least as far as I know)

but are considered the tongues of angels, to which Paul refers,

or the way the Spirit intercedes on our behalf when we can’t find the words.

So in the end, to the question as to whether I believe this story happened literally or symbolically,

I’m definitely on the more literal side. And here is the reason:

The disciples were 12 ordinary, average, uneducated, unsophisticated men

who usually got what Jesus was talking about all wrong, and who constantly let him down,  
even up to the crucifixion when they betrayed and denied and abandoned him,  
and even after the resurrection, when they locked themselves away for fear.

These were not the kind of people who could change the world! And yet the world was changed!

Christianity spread like wildfire. It became the dominant world religion. And it has lasted for nearly 2000 years.

There is just no way that those 12 disciples could have changed the world by their own power.

Now I believe that the Spirit is present in our lives in some fashion from the time we take our first breath.

My first memory, in fact, is when God spoke to me thru the Spirit, calling me to be a pastor, when I was just 3 years old.

And throughout my life, there were certainly times I was aware of the Spirit at work, usually at major life transitions.

I’ve also seen the Spirit active in congregations.

The fact that we still have \$600,000 in our endowment fund  
after 10 years of \$60,000 or more deficits is evidence to me of the Spirit at work.  
Some may credit the stock market, but for me there is no doubt that it is the Spirit  
who chose to work through the stock market.

Even these past few weeks right here in church,  
I prayed that if the sale of our property was supposed to go through,  
God would make it go through quickly and smoothly  
and that if it was not supposed to go through, God would either intervene on the buyer's side,  
or God would make it crystal clear to us that we should pull out.  
And the Spirit worked and God answered that prayer, making it crystal clear that we should pull out.

As I said, I believe that the Spirit is active in all of us to one degree or the other.

But several years ago I encountered people who seemed to have a lot more of the Spirit than I had.  
They had more joy; they had more love; they had more trust; they had more faith;  
they understood something about the power of God that I did not.

And I was in need, in great need, of something more.

So I prayed that God would pour into me a greater portion of the Spirit.

And one day God answered my prayer in a pretty dramatic way. I wanted more and I got more!

How do I know I received something more?

Lots of reasons, but let me just give you two.

It changed my heart and gave me a passion for evangelism.

Prior to that, evangelism meant marketing, communications, and publicity  
in order to grow the institution of the church  
and get more people in the pews and more money in the offering plate.

Oh, I probably didn't actually think about it in that way, but looking back that's what it was.

What happened after God gave me more of the Spirit was that

all of the sudden I had a passion for telling people about our amazing God!

Related to evangelism, it also made me more aware of God's presence in my daily life.

All of a sudden I would see God at work in amazing ways and I could not keep quiet!

I would find myself telling a family member or a friend

or another church person or someone outside the church or a complete stranger  
about the latest amazing thing God had done in my life.

The more amazing things I saw and the more amazing things I shared

then the more amazing things I saw and the more amazing things I shared!

Just last week I was sitting in a zoom meeting

and the host asked if we had anything to share about what God was doing in our lives,

and while the first 2 people were talking I literally had to sit on my hands because I wanted to be yelling,

"Call on me! Call on me! I want to tell you the amazing thing God did this past week!"

I believe that if every one of us here at Salem was to ask for and receive a greater portion of God's Spirit,  
we would have as much power to change the world as those first disciples at Pentecost had.

Salem's "why" or purpose is threefold: to encounter God, to build relationships, and to change the world.

I remember when we were trying to discern our "why" we talked about that third part of changing the world  
and someone asked if that didn't seem a little arrogant.

Maybe we should just think about changing Bridgeport or maybe just the neighborhood.

And I said, "No! I want to change the world!"

And with the Spirit, we have the power to change the whole world just like those first disciples.

As I close this message on this great day of Pentecost, I ask you to pray with me.

God of power & might, God of wind & flame, we ask you now for a greater portion of your Spirit.

Open our hearts and minds and spirits and bodies to receive more of you!

Increase our faith, increase our hope, increase our love, increase our joy.

Make us more aware of your presence that we might sing your praises.

Empower us to change the world. We pray in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit. Amen