

If I told you that I think it is possible that we can be a real Pentecostal congregation, what would your response be? Some of us will say, “all right. I can’t wait for all of us to be speaking in tongues and shouting out loudly in worship so that we rival our neighbors down the road. Others of us would go tearing out the back door and we would never see you again. And what’s really great about this congregation is that both people are sitting next to one another. Those that love highly emotional services and those that love more subdued worship experiences. But when we look to the passage from Acts 2, we may find that Pentecostal may mean something very different than what we may assume it to mean.

If I asked you what comes to mind when I say Pentecost, you may say something about violent wind coming from the heavens. You may say something about tongues of fire resting on the heads of Jesus’ followers. You may say something about people speaking in foreign languages but people being able to understand one another. You may use words like amazed, perplexed, filled by the spirit.

You may say something about a sermon from Peter about young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams, sons and daughters prophesying. You may say something about 3000 people becoming Christians that day. You may say something about the birth of the church through the power of the Holy Spirit. If you were to recall any of these details you would be correct.

Pentecost is indeed about all of these events. But Pentecost isn’t just about a mountaintop experience that many Christians look to today as a model of what Christian worship should look like. Pentecost, we discover in the last verses in chapter 2 of Acts is so, so, so much more. We discover that beyond a mountaintop experience, Pentecost is about 4 very important elements that must be a part of a faithful Christian community.

The first of these four elements we discover at the end of Pentecost is that the people came together and devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching. Christianity isn't just about an experience of connecting to the Holy Other. Christianity is also about learning how to grow and develop.

Some of us have had mountaintop experiences of God. Some of us can look to divine encounters. But faith in God does not end with an experience. Faith in God must be nurtured through teaching one another and teaching others about the faith. You and I have a responsibility to learn and to teach.

The second result of Pentecost is fellowship. The Greek word is koinonia. Not surface level relationship but real embodied relationship with one another and with the larger population. As you will read in the newsletter if you have not already, I have been walking through the neighborhood of Creeks Edge everyday. When I see someone on the street, I stop and talk to them and listen to their story. And the stories I am hearing is about loneliness. People yearning for real koinonia. And I hear that from folks inside the church as well. We don't want surface level relationships. We desire authentic places where people can be honest with people that they trust. So a real Pentecost requires real koinonia.

The third element of Pentecost that we discover at the end of Acts 2 is the breaking of bread. Today we take part in not just communion but the act of breaking bread with fellow believers who are seeking to grow in Pentecost as well. We commune with one another and we commune with God. Through this act of communion, we are participating in Pentecost.

The fourth element of Pentecost that we discover at the end of Acts 2 is prayers for one another. Pentecost is not an event which distances you and me from the needs of one another and the larger world. But Pentecost leads us to care for and lift up one another in prayer.

And what is the result of this community that teaches, fellowships with one another, breaks bread with one another, and prays for one another? They end up sharing all things in common. They sell possessions and no one is in need. Compare this to the passage in Ecclesiastes which states that those who love money never are happy with money. And then some of those who have money end up losing it anyway in bad investments.

Today we celebrate Pentecost. And yes we celebrate with recognizing wind and tongues of fire. But the way that Pentecost really becomes real today is when we teach, when we fellowship in real ways, when we break bread together, and when we pray together.

When our church community does these four elements and shares these elements out into the larger world, then indeed we are a truly Pentecostal congregation. AMEN.

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-Text: Acts 2

-Given: May 31, 2009 in Allison Creek Presbyterian Church (York, SC)