

## Put On Your Crash Helmets

Acts 2:1-21

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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In *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, Annie Dillard writes, “Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we blithely invoke?...It is madness to wear ladies’ straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets” (Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters*; New York: Harper & Row, 1982, pp. 40-41).

Perhaps no story in scripture illustrates this better than the Pentecost story as told in Acts 2. While John tells us that Jesus gives his disciples the Holy Spirit by the simple and seemingly gentle act of breathing on them (John 20:22), here Luke paints a very different picture.

Here the Spirit comes in ways that can only be described with loud sounds and surprising sights and impossible interactions. Here the Spirit bursts into the room with power and energy. As Dr. Margaret Aymer writes, “The spirit comes suddenly (*aphno*), even violently (*biaias*) upon the gathered.... Here [in this text when the people are], “amazed” [this] should be considered a less than pleasant emotion. This is not the joy of a child seeing a magic trick. These have gathered because they also heard the violent wind (Acts 2:6). Their sentiment is closer to bewilderment; they are flummoxed by all of the signs and portents” ([Commentary on Acts 2:1-21 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)).

Friends, if we have gotten comfortable with the Pentecost story...if we do nothing more today than delight in the reds and oranges, candles and spring breezes...then we need to hear and experience it again.

Because the God who comes in the Spirit on Pentecost and who keeps showing up for us again and again, is a God who asks something of us...this is a God who calls us **out** of our comfortable places and into the world.

We remember when we were in our building for this day’s worship, we would dress the sanctuary up with lights and sounds, gleaming and glittering fabrics and more candles than the fire marshal might approve of. Pentecost is, as someone in Bible study referred to it, a day of “razzle dazzle.” And we enjoy the way this day engages our senses.

But, remember, this isn’t just about being visually shocked in worship...this isn’t just about doing something a little different during worship...we dress things up at Pentecost because this is an experience that stands out...it is a shocking experience not just in the moment but because of how it calls us out.

And we must not lose that reality.

Because today is a day when we are asked to hear again the ways that we are called out into the world, to meet people in the midst of *their* lived reality, and to carry with us not only the presence but the *power* of our God.

And what better time than now for this story to come up again?

We have spent 14 months physically separated from one another. We have spent 14 months with very little in our lives being what we might call “normal.”

And while everything isn’t back to the way it used to be, we are at the point where we can see the possibilities again. We are at the point where we are seeing each other more than we did. We are at the point where we are rejoining some groups and some activities that had been put on hold. We are at the point where we are hopeful that before too long we’ll worship in our church building again, although I think we’ve also learned we will never worship *only* in our church building.

So, what better time than now, as we are feeling the pull to step back into our old ways...what better time than now to listen intentionally to the Spirit.

Friends, there is much about how we have been church together that we want to hold on to. And, God has a vision for how we will continue to grow and change and make a difference in this world. God has a call for us not to just do that with which we are comfortable. God also has a call that stretches us sometimes into uncomfortable places, but always into God’s intention.

So, what is the calling that God has for First Christian Church?

What gifts has God shared with you to support the mission to which we are called together?

What dreams are our old people dreaming for our ministry together?

What visions are our young people embracing to move us forward in Jesus’ ways?

What prophetic word is coming to us from our siblings, male and female, old and young, poor and rich, LGBTQ and straight, white, black, indigenous, and people of color?

What dream and vision, word and calling is the Spirit blowing into our midst as we are called to be ever more faithful?

These are the questions for this day.

And if our best answers do nothing but make us comfortable, then friends, we probably need to listen again. Because the Spirit doesn’t blow us inward, but blows us out into the world, into the lives of people who are different from us, into the places where joy mingles with trauma, into places that cause us to stretch and become more than we already are.

As Rev. Allen Harris said, “More often than not the Spirit calls me to use my power, place, and privilege to ensure that other voices are heard, other interests are

considered, needs are met, safety is secured, and faithfulness is honored” (in sermon *There Voices Are In My Bones* for Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance Virtual Pulpit Supply).

So on this Pentecost Sunday, let's be intentional about listening. Because the last thing we are asked to do is to go back inside and quit interacting with the world...the last thing we are asked to do is to take care of ourselves and not worry about anyone else...the last thing we are asked to do is to build walls of protection around ourselves while people on the other side are suffering.

Pentecost is a wonderful day in worship, but it is also a day to remember that our faith is intended to disturb us...intended to send us out...intended to cause us to listen to new voices and see people we usually just walk past.

Pentecost is a wonderful day in worship, but it doesn't end here. Rather, from here we are sent forth to be the presence of Christ in this world with all the joy and risk that entails. After all, remember what Annie Dillard said...we must be ready to take off our baseball caps and straw hats and to put on our construction hats and crash helmets...because God is about doing surprising things with us and through us. Friends, put on that crash helmet...here comes the Spirit!