

“Welcoming the Inevitable”

1 Corinthians 12:4-13; Acts 2:1-21 – Tesa Hauser
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Holy God, bless the speaking and the hearing of these words, that we might be empowered by the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pentecost is here, but you already knew that. You knew its arrival was imminent. Remember in school when you had an exam? You knew the date, and you probably knew what and how you needed to study, and yet there are different types of study-ers, are there not? There are those who prepare their schedule for when and what they will study. There are those who will study everything at the last minute, staying up all night the night before to try and squeeze in every bit before the test the next day. Then, there are those who don't even study! They may re-read a chapter or two, but somehow, they have that information stored in their brains and can do without a study session. How people welcome a test is different according to their needs and abilities.

There is something funny about the Pentecost story in Acts other than the rushing wind and flaming tongues. In the Gospel of John, the Risen Christ provides the gift of the Spirit. There isn't much detail in the John story, and the Holy Spirit's gifting is for a specific community of leaders (men and women), not empowering the expanded community of people we hear of in Acts. However, I'm fine with

some “contradiction;” I’m fine to think that before the Pentecost moment, Jesus brought peace and empowered his closest followers after his resurrection. I also believe that is why he never stopped mentioning it, because that wasn’t the only time it would occur. There was that moment we hear of in John, but then The Moment of the Holy Spirit's arrival that would usher in the Church and the greater Christian community in Acts.

The disciples knew the gift of the Holy Spirit was coming. Jesus had mentioned it multiple times while he was on Earth, and especially before his ascension. In Acts, the crowd is astonished, amazed, and perplexed by the event. However, we are missing the responses of the men and women, the people who had been following Jesus before the event and were gathered together. I think this is solidified by Peter’s response. He welcomes the Spirit like someone who understands and *potentially* received it before; or welcomes what Jesus said was inevitable.

More so, the Holy Spirit is not meant for the few but the many, for the immigrant, the outsider, slave, or free. Christ has invited all to be a part of this new thing. Like the resurrection story, it sounds ridiculous, almost impossible, but wholly inevitable. This is the act of the Holy Spirit, who will show up throughout the book and throughout history to empower communities far and wide. The Spirit

empowers those who are seen as the least of these, God shows up, and it doesn't make any sense, and yet God.

Paul shares in Corinthians that people were separating and controlling one another, depending on the gift provided by the Spirit. It's important at this point to distinguish gifts and talents. Talents are what people may innately possess and can provide guidance and support for their communities. Then you have gifts, offered by the grace of the Holy Spirit for the good of the entire community. Gifts have no hierarchy but are provided by the same Spirit to people for the entire body of Christ.

When we think of the Pentecost scene, what image dominates our mind? We may not typically include women, children, or slaves, which was typical writing practice and view of households and power. However, then the radical shift occurs, right? From one of the most unlikely people as well - Peter, Mr. sticks his foot in his mouth any chance he gets and denies Jesus before his death. I'm not holding these things against Peter, Jesus sure doesn't, but I am trying to share that even from the unlikeliest sources, God empowers and uses through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Again, Peter along with the eleven, stands up, as if they know this situation is out of the norm. They may have, potentially, maybe, experienced this, and will help the rest of the community make sense of it. He has this peace in his sermon,

and in the John version where Jesus provides the Spirit, Jesus begins with providing peace that is not of this world. Again, there is probably no correlation between John's version and Acts' version of the Holy Spirit, but it seems like the early disciples welcomed this event as if it's happened before. Or that is what the Holy Spirit does, provide guidance and clarity in the midst of chaos.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit means a radical shift in hospitality and inclusion for the early Jesus followers, which were primarily made up of Jewish believers. Moving forward, the community of believers will expand, and the work of the Holy Spirit accompanies the leaders who will fulfill the mission to share the good news to the ends of the earth. However, despite its far reach, there is much work to do.

What is unfortunately inevitable as we know, is that the radical call of inclusion, unity, and care are not continued among society and among believers from those early Act days. We know that humans are complex beings that require reminding, who seek power, and ways to control others for personal gain. We can be overwhelmed by the state of the world, and become apathetic, thinking what influence do we even make?

Here is where I ask us to welcome the inevitable. We know that pain and suffering are still inevitable in this world, that violence is very real, that racism, and prejudice are prevalent. We know that there are many who are dealing with

illness of the body and the mind, and work is being done to create cures and care, and it doesn't feel fast enough. That wars ravage countries and that people go to bed hungry every night. That death still occurs and we have to live with the pain and the grief and complexity of it in our daily lives. However, I am not asking us to welcome these things as embracing it and acting in similar manners, but as people who know that these are inevitable parts of life. I'm asking that in the midst of all that, we also welcome the inevitable gift of the Holy Spirit. The receiving of the Holy Spirit means that God's promises are true, and that inevitably, God will redeem and restore the cosmos.

Welcoming the inevitable is Holy Spirit empowered lives and communities. It's radical care and compassion, and hospitality that doesn't make sense to the world, because God doesn't always make sense to the world. The disciples and the crowd didn't always understand Jesus, but he would send the Holy Spirit to guide us and remind us of our belief in Him. If we believe in Jesus Christ, we believe that this isn't it, this isn't all there is, the resurrection welcomes us to these truths. There is more to come and yet, we are asked to do what we can now with the gifts provided by the Spirit, which will be different for each person.

It doesn't matter what gift you have or method of studying or test taking feels most comfortable to you. The wonderful thing about these tests is if you fail, you can try again, and sometimes you can get some help. The tests of life aren't

pass/fail, they aren't counted on a scale, they are complex and can be ongoing. The tests of life are inevitable, but welcome them knowing that you aren't alone, that Jesus has provided the Spirit and she is a force to be reckoned with. When it seems like the hardships of this world, personally and in our communities, are too hard to handle, let us welcome the Spirit into our hearts and minds, remembering that the promises of God too, are inevitable. Hallelujah and amen.