

It is true: I enjoy celebrating Pentecost. You probably enjoy it too, because it is exciting! The coming of the Holy Spirit during the Feast of Pentecost is described like a gale force wind, a wildfire, with multiple languages being spoken to give praise to God. We heard Peter compare it to the prophet Joel’s vision of the coming of the Day of the Lord! All told it seemed to be truly sensational – engaging almost all of the senses of everyone there in a wondrous community-wide experience! And while Jesus’ disciples gathered together in one place in Jerusalem; it was the Spirit who brought together a vast array of people who were originally from every place, from every direction beyond Jerusalem. It was like the Spirit blew the city gates off their hinges and invited the world to share in this experience! . . . And even some two thousand years later, it still seems as if we can feel the reverberations of Spirit’s power at work on that day.

But receiving the Spirit is about much more than just this one, wild experience that people in Jerusalem had on that day. God continues to pour out the Holy Spirit on each and every community, on all believers – even us! And we can receive the Spirit over and over again as we worship and study and pray together. Receiving the Spirit is not a “one and done” experience! Because over and over again the Spirit continues to bring the presence of Christ to us to enliven our hearts and minds, our thoughts and actions, to help us bear witness to the reconciling love of God. And as the apostle Paul writes, we “did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear”! Falling back into enslavement to sinfulness and unfaithfulness is not the work of the Spirit! No, we received a spirit of adoption as children of God, to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We have received the Spirit of Truth who has come to dwell in us with the gift of life in Christ, with the love of God that is stronger than death. Through the Spirit we have received a very powerful inheritance.

Could it maybe be too powerful? Does it make us a little queasy when Jesus says things like, “The person who trusts me will not only do what I’m doing but even greater things, because I . . . am giving you the same work to do that I’ve been doing.” (*John 14:12 The Message*) I’m sure that also didn’t sound quite right to the first disciples who heard Jesus say it on the same night that he was arrested. And when Jesus was crucified by the end of the next day, the disciples probably wondered if they would also be crucified for just being followers of Jesus – forget even trying to do greater things than Jesus did! Admittedly the disciples seemed to calm down over the next forty days when they spent time with the resurrected Jesus. And this Pentecost experience really seemed to spur them to a new level of witnessing to the good news of Jesus the Christ. But the Spirit didn’t leave them with an inheritance that was only as fun and festive as suddenly being able to speak another language! Paul wrote to the Roman believers that being “joint heirs with Christ” also means suffering “with him so that we may also be glorified with him” (*Romans 8:17 NRSV*).

The hard stuff that comes with living as a faithful witness didn't go away on that great and glorious day of Pentecost. But the power to face the hard things; the power to go through the suffering; the power to endure the pain – that power was amped up when we received the Spirit and became children and heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

I realize that doesn't mean that there aren't times when each one of us can feel completely wrung out, as if our "get up and go" has got up and gone, and the Spirit's power seems to have been shut off. We're not all going to be humming along at 100% power all the time. But somebody will be at 100% power – and they will help to light the way until we can get back to full power. And then we'll be able to help light the way for somebody else who is not at 100% power. We can keep the spiritual energy grid up and running by working together with each other and God's Spirit. We can keep doing the work that Jesus entrusted to us: to love people as we have been loved; to help people become reconciled with God and one another; to care for the vulnerable; to connect those who are alone into a community of support.

You know we read about a wave of understanding that swept through this diverse crowd on the day of Pentecost, when each person could hear what was being said in their own language. That when the language barrier was eliminated – people could freely communicate with one another and be drawn closer together. The same thing could happen if we work at removing other barriers between people – and are able to freely communicate across differences in age, income, education, life history, political leanings, and where it is that we call "home," or who it is that we call "family." If we call upon the Spirit to help us to connect and communicate with one another as fellow children of God, and joint heirs with Christ, we could see the Day of the Lord arrive, the Day tremendous and marvelous. The day when anyone who calls out for help to God will be saved – and when any of God's children will reach out to help them with an open hand and a full heart. That's the kind of Pentecost experience that the world needs, that the family of God needs, today and every day. May it come to be with the help of the Spirit. Amen.