

“Sighs Too Deep For Words”

Romans 8:22-27, Pentecost, 27 May 2012

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Romans 8:22-27

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

I. Prayer.

II. History of Pentecost / Significance of Red

1. Origin: Jewish agricultural celebration, Jewish festival, 50th day after first Sabbath of Passover.
2. Evolved into a celebration of Moses giving Law on Mt. Sinai, creating Hebrew nation out of misfits.
3. Similarly, Christian Pentecost celebrates founding of Church out of a band of fearful disciples.
4. After resurrection & ascension, disciples feared for their lives. Locked secretly behind closed doors.
5. Today's lesson from Acts 2: the Holy Spirit came with wind and fire: RED! Power: to begin their mission.
 - a. Red is my favorite color.
 - Color of Fire Engines.
 - Color of flame in the United Methodist trademark symbol.
 - Liturgical color of the Holy Spirit.

III. The Holy Spirit has a long history:

1. In Genesis (2:7) it breathed into man the Breath of Life.
2. In Ezekiel (37) it breathed life into the dry bones.
3. In our Gospel lesson (John 16) Jesus promises to send the Advocate after he leaves.
4. Paul speaks extensively about the Holy Spirit (Many gifts, one Spirit)

IV. Early Church developed Trinitarian understanding of God

1. Polycarp (70-160), Bishop of Smyrna, Disciple of John the Apostle: “O Lord God almighty... I bless you and glorify you through the eternal and heavenly high priest Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom be glory to you, with Him and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever”
2. Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen.
3. 4th Century: Article of Faith, drafted by Council of Nicea (325) and Council of Constantinople (381). Established Trinity, separating itself away from Judaism and Islam.

4. 11th Century Division:

- Roman (Latin) understanding: Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. VS.
- Greek (Orthodox) belief: Holy Spirit proceeded only from the Father.

V. The Holy Spirit Today: DISCIPLINE reflects our Roman heritage "...The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God." (Article IV- Of the Holy Ghost, P.103. Section 3 Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules) The old version adds, "He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth."

1. This is my experience: God with me, my comforter, sustainer, guide and power.
 - a. God with me: in every breath (with me and in me). God knows every intimate detail of my life.
 - b. Holy Spirit is my comforter:
 - Death of loved ones.
 - Job and appointment changes.
 - Health crisis.
 - Maturing children and emerging adults.
 - c. Holy Spirit is my sustainer: comes to help me in my weakness (Romans 8, our lesson for today).
 - When I can't pray, the Spirit does for me.
 - When I can't speak, the Spirit intercedes with "sighs too deep for words."
 - Human life is like childbirth: hard, painful. With the Spirit's help, we will be led to greater glory.
 - d. Holy Spirit is my guide: (John 16, Gospel for today). Guides Disciples of Jesus into all truth.
 - Leads me, *lures* me to the right decision.
 - e. Holy Spirit is my power: I have no strength. God is my strength. The Holy Spirit is my surge of energy when I am tired. It is the discipline and control when everything else falls apart. My strength is in the Lord.

VI. Conclusion. This has been my faith experience; of the Holy Spirit moving, breathing, and working in and through me. How about you?

1. Some have yet to experience the Spirit. Like tuning a piano: tune your faith. Work hard to build faith and hope. Then be vigilant for signs: listen, watch, experience the Holy Spirit working.

2. Some remember a previous era in which the Spirit appeared to be more active.

BREAKING NEWS: the Holy Spirit is just as active today as it ever was, we just haven't changed fast enough to keep pace!

a. Get unstuck!

b. Fly your kite in its wind!

3. And some of you may be riding on the wings of eagles right now! Don't look down. And don't boast about how Spirit filled you are. Instead, give your life away. And in your giving you will receive. By emptying yourself, you will be filled. By keeping ahead of the change, you will be transformed "from glory into glory."

4. Thanks be to God, this day and always, for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Amen!