

“Something Happened!”

Acts 2:1-12; John 14:8-17

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I hope you will join me in praying that - like our seven confirmands with us this morning - there will be a growing number of people who will yearn for and be willing to learn more about a spiritual reality that is all around us and within us ... people who are willing to know and experience the Holy Spirit.

Christian people share something in common with people of other faiths: we are looking for something beyond ourselves. And whatever view we have of Pentecost, Christians surely agree that something happened back on that day that still affects us dramatically today. Most of us are seeking a deeper experience of Christ. May I be so bold as to suggest that in recent times there is something new and fresh in our midst at Memorial Church. There is a new spiritual dynamic that God has let loose. I think we are having our own mini-Pentecost!

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly ... something happened! Something very powerful and explosive must have happened that day to give that little band of disciples the impetus, the character, the courage, the passion, zeal, poise and power to become the church that has been God’s primary agent of mission in the world for more than twenty centuries. Something must have happened, and like so many of the most transformational events in our lives it may have happened so quickly, so powerfully, that even the disciples were not sure what exactly happened. Jimmy Buffet sings about how hard it is to describe the ocean if you’re never seen it. It is hard to describe an experience, such as the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, if one has nothing to compare it to.

Something happened! The story of Pentecost is the way the church remembers and tells about what happens when the Holy Spirit both disrupts and empowers God’s people. Something hits us like a tornado. There is a disturbance ... a moment when it feels like all of the papers on a desk have just been blown all over the room. There is something like the wind of a thunderstorm. The Holy Spirit hits us and disrupts all of our neat little piles of paper. It blows down fences and walls and borders we have erected. It jumbles all of our hopes and dreams into a bigger pile. The Holy Spirit may hit us with the force of a mighty gale ... coming

into our lives ... disrupting our lives ... rearranging our lives. That is why we do well to heed the admonition, "Do not pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit if you are happy with your life as it is."

A reading entitled *An Interview with God* hit the Internet about nine years ago. The author was a woman named Reata Strickland. Reata was a Web designer for the University of Alabama. She put this reading on the Web with pictures and sound. The month it was posted it was ranked as the second most visited new Web site with three million hits within its first three weeks. It grew each month and was translated into twenty different languages around the world. Reata Strickland was pleased and even though she had received some criticism, she said, "The simplicity and the depth of the words cross cultures, cross denominations, cross world religions." *An Interview with God* can be found on the Web at YouTube

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3Agm5ztO1s>) or at www.TheInterviewWithGod.com .

Here it is: *I dreamed I had an interview with God. "So you would like to interview me?" God asked. "If you have the time," I said. God smiled. "My time is eternity. What questions do you have in mind for me?" "What surprises you most about humankind?" I asked. God answered: "That they get bored with childhood. They rush to grow up and then long to be children again. That they lose their health to make money and then lose their money to restore their health. That by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present, such that they live in neither the present nor the future. That they live as if they will never die, and die as if they had never lived."*

God's hand took mine and we were silent for a while. And then I asked, "As a parent, what are some of life's lessons you want your children to learn?" God replied with a smile: "To learn they cannot make anyone love them. What they can do is let themselves be loved. To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others. To learn that a rich person is not one who has the most, but is one who needs the least. To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in persons we love, and it takes many years to heal them. To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness. To learn that there are persons who love them dearly, but simply do not know how to express or show their feelings. To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it differently. To learn that it is not always enough that they be forgiven by others. But that they must forgive themselves. And to learn that I am here - always."

I believe that the people of Memorial, represented by our confirmands, are seeking a deeper experience with God. We are acutely aware that there is something more in life than the physical world. As Christians, we know that something happened in the life of Jesus that has affected us unlike any other event or person. We know that something happened to the first followers of Jesus on that Day of Pentecost – something supernatural, something extraordinary, something real, something good.

A young man came to the church and asked the usher, “When does the good stuff happen?” The usher asked what the young man meant, and he said that stuff about rushing winds, tongues of fire, and the commotion of people simultaneously speaking many languages. The usher said, “We don’t do that in this church.” The young man left and never returned.

But we do have something like that stuff happening here at Memorial! Something happened at Pentecost. Something happened that looked something like the story in Acts, and something like that is still the work of the Holy Spirit – even today, even within this place. Fresh winds of God’s Spirit are blowing. Something new and alive is happening within our spiritual lives and this church family. It is exciting! It is powerful stuff! It is God’s work of transformation!

Disturbing? Yes! Empowering? Yes! Let us not be afraid of what is happening ...what God is doing in our midst! Rather, let us embrace what is happening and move forward with God’s spirit.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.