

Daily Discipleship

Pentecost (B) – Acts 2:1-21

The Choices of Discipleship: *Spirit-filled or Spirit-emptied?*

Focus Question: *How is my life Spirit-filled?*

word of life

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” Acts 2:4 (NRSV)

Read Acts 2:1-21

After Jesus rose from the dead, but before he ascended to heaven, Jesus instructed the disciples to remain in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:4-5) Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to empower the disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

During this time, Jews from all the known world gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, an agricultural festival commemorating the first fruits of the harvest. Although they came from many lands and spoke in a variety of languages, these devout Jews were united in their heritage. On the actual day of Pentecost, the disciples were all together in Jerusalem, waiting as Jesus instructed.

1. *Imagine the conversations among the disciples as they waited for the Holy Spirit.*

Suddenly, a loud sound interrupted their waiting as a violent wind filled their house. Then tongues of fire passed through the room, touching each of them. Each was filled with God’s Spirit and began to speak in other languages. No doubt these men were speaking in languages they had never personally studied nor perhaps even heard. This was not a human event, but it was God’s mighty Spirit at work, transforming scared disciples into power-filled witnesses.

2. *Describe that scene in your own words.*

3. *Imagine yourself as one of the disciples on Pentecost. Describe your feelings.*

The noise was so loud that it attracted a crowd. Everyone was amazed, perplexed and confused. How could these Galileans have the capacity to speak in languages from far-away places – languages not studied by the Galileans? In addition, the disciples were not just babbling in other languages or talking about the weather. They were giving clear testimony to God’s mighty acts.

4. *What would it have been like to be part of the crowd?*

5. *How did the crowd try to explain the actions of the disciples?*

Peter was inspired to speak to the crowd. This was the same man who cowardly denied Jesus three times in the courtyard; but once filled with the Holy Spirit, he gave a courageous witness to God and God’s activity in Jesus Christ.

God was fulfilling the prophecy of the Old Testament through these disciples. God’s Spirit had come and transformed them. Sons and daughters, slaves and free, women and men were to be involved in God’s mission, turning the world upside down. The young would see visions and the old would dream dreams.

6. *How did the prophecy from Joel become reality on that Pentecost?*

7. *What did it mean for the Holy Spirit to be poured out?*

word among us

Life is full of choices. Those choices include following Christ on a daily basis and learning to be his disciple. John McCullough Bade describes the struggles of choices in his poem “Choose Life” from Will I Sing Again: Listening for the Melody of Grace in the Silence of Illness and Loss. The poem begins:

“Eenie, meenie, minie, mo. .
She loves me, she loves me not . . .
Heads, you win; tails, you lose . . .
Just close your eyes and pick one . . .
Pull a name out of the hat. . . .
Spin the bottle . . .
Some choices are so simple and made so arbitrarily
We seldom give them another thought.
And some are so painful and life-changing
We lie awake at night agonizing over the decision
Long before and long after it is made.
Is that how our decision is for you, O God?
In many ways, the decision is so simple and obvious
We don’t need to ponder it.”

During the summer, this *Daily Discipleship* series is focusing on the choices related to discipleship. Following Christ is not an automatic process to be programmed into our spirit. As humans, we can set up roadblocks to God and the Spirit. Our lives can be emptied of the Holy Spirit because of our own human refusal to allow God’s Spirit to be at work.

1. *Describe a Spirit-emptied life.*
2. *Describe a Spirit-filled life.*
3. *What choices do you face as you follow Christ?*

On Pentecost, the disciples made a choice to be together and wait for the Holy Spirit. They probably did not know what to expect or when the Spirit would appear, but they chose to be ready.

4. *What other choices did those first disciples make?*
5. *How did the Spirit change the lives of the disciples?*

John McCullough Bade’s poem “Choose Life” concludes in this way:

“In our struggle of competing choices, O God,
remind us again of the promise and power of your Word.
Give us strength and courage to dare to choose life.
Set our minds and hearts toward you alone,
that we might know the inexpressible joys of life in you.”

God’s Spirit is full of power and can transform lives. Take a moment to ponder the ways God’s Spirit is at work in your life. Share your reflections with each other.

Prayer

Pour out your Spirit on my life. Amen

Dig Deeper

John 20:19-23

last word

Pray each day to be open to God’s gift of the Holy Spirit.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship

Pentecost (B) Page 2 of 2