

A SERMON BY RACHEL DAVIES- VAN VOORHIS

Pentecost and the Holy Spirit



20 May 2018

Romans 8:22-27
John 15:26-27
Psalm 104:25-35,37

In our Gospel for today, we hear Jesus tell his disciples many things, but when I was reading John in preparation for this Homily, one line struck me in particular. Jesus addresses his disciples, saying, “I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” Jesus is leaving his disciples, knowing full well that they fundamentally do not understand the implications of what is going to happen to them and to the world after his death, but he knows that he cannot explain any of what is to come to them, because their minds and hearts are not yet ready to understand the magnitude of the Kingdom of Heaven. Second, Jesus does let them know that help is coming; that, even after he is gone and raised from the dead, he will send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, the Advocate, to guide them.

When the Spirit finally comes to the disciples, on Pentecost, it comes as “a sound like the rush of a violent wind,” and as “divided tongues, as if of fire.” The Spirit does not come as a human, like Jesus did, because the Spirit does not bring a message of its own, rather, it unlocks within us the facilities of compassion and understanding. All of the many wonderful and powerful acts that they performed after Pentecost were not because the Spirit was given to them, but because their eyes were opened and they were awakened to that piece of the Holy Spirit that already resided within their hearts. Like the disciples, we are all waiting, not for the divine to come into us, but for us to understand how God is assisting us in unlocking that central part of ourselves, that part that is already made in His image.

I’m eighteen years old. I graduate from high school in less than three weeks, and I am not at all prepared for life as an “adult.” Regardless of the baby steps that come between high school graduation and true adulthood, this is a big jump for me, and for all of the young people you know going through the various leaps of faith, and in faith, right now. Luckily I have a great family and a great church family; many people who, in short, give great advice. For all that I’m worried about growing up, I know that I have a support network here, my own Spirit of truth, who will guide me whenever I stumble on the path.

As we are all headed off in myriad directions for the summer, we should remember that, even though we are not able to understand the full picture in this moment, your rush of

wind or tongue of fire is already here, perhaps sitting in the pew next to you, and all you have to do, is trust that the Spirit inside you is the same as the Spirit that descended upon the disciples, and everything else will follow from that.

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