

11am-Confirmation Sunday Sermon

Some would listen to this story of the Pentecost....

The day when the Spirit was first poured out on the believers,

On what was to become the origins of the church,

And ask where is the Spirit today?

The manifestations...the evidence of the Spirit could not have been missed that day;

Everyone saw them.

Now some thought that the signs were from natural sources,

Some thought that the whole crowd was drunk or had gone mad.

But no one in that crowd missed the signs...of the Spirit.

Loud sounds like the rush of a mighty wind

Light and heat surrounding each person as if they had tongues of fire on their shoulders and heads.

Pretty dramatic scene....

so where is the Spirit today?

Where are the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in our day and age?

Well, if we want to see the Holy Spirit and feel it's power;

All we have to do is look right here in our two front pews.

Our youth, in their presentation, described the first Pentecost event as a miracle from God.

Look, here's your continuing miracle.

And I'm not talking about the fact that they made it through classes and memorized the Apostles' Creed....

That's a miracle too.

What I'm talking about goes much deeper....

Parents, you brought these young people to the waters of baptism when they were just infants;

Many of them...before they could speak or reason.

Some of you may not know exactly why you brought them.

You might have thought you brought them because it was your family tradition.

You might have thought you brought them because it is the thing to do.

You might have thought you brought them because of your own faith.

But I am here to tell you today that you brought them because God called you to.

In your own baptism, you were given the Holy Spirit,

The same Spirit that caused all that uproar over 2000 years ago,

That same Spirit that was poured out on that original crowd.

that same Spirit is with you and in you.

And it is that same Spirit that drew you back to the waters with your children,

It is the same Spirit that has drawn to you this moment.

It is the same Spirit that has walked with you, and cried with you and celebrated with you each and every day of your journey as parents.

Here is the manifestation of the Spirit!

That your children have come to this day.

That our eighth grade students are here to lead worship.

That our ninth grade students are here to affirm their own baptism.

Here is the manifestation of the Spirit.

That these young people have been willing to think about their faith,
And talk about their faith.

That these young people have been willing to ask the hard questions

That they have been willing to talk about their fears...

That they have been able to say "I'm afraid of death and what comes after it"

And that they have been able to say that even though they are afraid and doubt
sometimes, they still believe.

That they have been able to say that they think God guides them in their daily
lives and that God ultimately has a purpose for their lives, even if they don't yet know
what that purpose is.

Here is the manifestation of the Spirit.

The Spirit is alive and active in this world.

Still bringing about daily miracles all around us.

We just need to become more attuned to them...

We just need to learn to look for the new ways in which the wind blows and the
fires burn.

On that first Pentecost, the tongues of fire were external.

Today, the fire burns in our hearts!

I pray that as we lay hands on you today and pray for you, you will feel that fire
burning in your hearts.

Confirmands....May God's Spirit continue to confirm your faith, guide your life,
empower you in your serving, give you patience in suffering, and bring you to eternal
life. Amen

Pentecost- 8 am and 9:30am sermon

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen

My sister-in-law Shari shared a story with me.

It's about four people: everybody, somebody, anybody and, nobody

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done

You may have heard this before. It's been passed around on the internet for some time. But I would like to change-up the story a little...

Put it into a more personal context.

There was some important work to be done at LCR

And everybody was sure that somebody would do it.

Everybody was sure that somebody would lead worship and somebody would sing in the choir

Everybody was sure that somebody would supply the flowers and somebody would set the altar for communion.

Everybody was sure that somebody would usher and somebody would greet the visitors

Everybody was sure that somebody would pray for those in need and somebody would invite a friend to worship

Everybody was sure that somebody would handle the finances and somebody would write out the checks

Everybody was sure that somebody would visit the sick and bring meals to the homebound

Everybody was sure that somebody would teach Sunday school and somebody would go to Sunday School.

Everybody was sure that somebody would write articles for the newsletter and somebody would fill a basket for the missions project

Everybody was sure that somebody would take care of the church building and somebody would care for the church grounds

Everybody was sure that somebody would provide coffee and snacks for fellowship and somebody would organize soup suppers
Everybody was sure that somebody would work with our youth and somebody would sleep out for boxcity
Everybody was sure that somebody would serve on church council and somebody would attend synod assembly
Everybody was sure that somebody would notice a missing member and somebody would call the family who hasn't been here in months
There is a lot of important work to be done here at LCR....to be done in God's kingdom,
And everybody is sure that somebody will do it.

Now let me ask you a question....are you somebody?

**And if you are somebody, have you been responding to God's call for your life?
if not, then why not?**

Jesse Jackson wrote a poem some years ago,
okay quite a few years ago...1966 to be exact....
A poem that became a battle cry for empowering youth.
It goes like this:

I am somebody
I am somebody
I may be poor
But I am somebody
I may be uneducated
But I am somebody
I may be unskilled
But I am somebody
I may have lost hope
But I am somebody
I may be young
But I am somebody
I may be on welfare
But I am somebody
I may be small
But I am somebody
I may make a mistake
But I am somebody
My clothes are different
My face is different. My hair is different
But I am somebody
I am black, brown, and white
I speak a different language
But I must be respected
Protected
Never rejected

I am God's child.
I am somebody.

I ask you again, are you somebody?
And what does it mean to be somebody?
What does it mean to be God's child?

It means that each and every one of us matters to God.
It means that each and every one of us has been claimed, gifted, and called by God.

First, We are claimed

How are we claimed...where are we claimed?
We are claimed in our baptism...
In the waters of baptism, God claims us as beloved and forgiven children....
In baptism, God declares us "somebody"
Somebody who belongs to God forever.

So we are claimed!

We are also Gifted.

When we are baptized, we receive the Holy Spirit
and along with that Spiritual presence of God, we receive gifts
....spiritual gifts...to help build up the Body of Christ.
these gifts include:
**administration, teaching, shepherding, serving, hospitality, mercy, faith, musical
ability, skilled crafts, evangelism, speaking in tongues, the interpretation of tongues.
Prophecy, giving, discernment.**

Each of us has a unique combination of these gifts to share.
In my last congregation, I was so saddened to hear one of the 75 year old members
come to a class on spiritual gifts and honestly say that she thought she had no gifts.
Thank God... by the end of the 6-week session, she thought differently.
Because the others in the class we able to identify her gifts for her and help her to
see what she had to offer.

So we are gifted! We are claimed and gifted

We are also called.

God does not give us gifts to hide and keep to ourselves.
God gives us gifts...and then **calls us** to use them for the sake of the Gospel and for the
sake of the world that God loves.
Each and every one of us is called....to ministry...
Each and every one of us is called to ...to serve God and serve others.
Each and every one of us is called to be **somebody** for the kingdom.
So we are called! We are claimed and gifted and called.

Now, if you are **somebody**, does that mean you have to jump up and do **all** the work here
at church?

Does that mean that you have to say “yes” every time someone asks you to do something?

No.....

Because it is true that not all of us have the same gifts.

Some people can’t preach...while others can’t dance...while others can’t crunch numbers, while others can’t cook.

We do not all have the same gifts, but **everybody can do something well.**

And everybody has **gifts to share for the common good**

Everybody.

Today, we celebrate Pentecost...

We celebrate the outpouring of the Spirit.

An outpouring that was not a one-time event,

But instead is a continuing process.....

The Spirit of God is in you.

You **have been claimed, and gifted, and called.**

YOU ARE SOMEBODY

And whether you have been using your gifts to the fullest,

Or whether your gifts have been on the shelf for a long time,

It doesn’t matter.

Today, the Spirit is calling you to re-acquaint yourself with those gifts.

Take those gifts off the shelf.

Look at them. Celebrate them.

Ask God how God wants you to use them.

and then get started.

So that you can change the story....

There are still four persons in the story: nobody, anybody, everybody, and somebody.

But now the story can go like this:

Because **nobody** can do what you can do.

Your unique combination of gifts cannot be duplicated by **anybody** else.

And **everybody** will benefit

when each **somebody** responds to God’s call.

Amen