

## “...The *Entire* House...”

[Text - Acts 2:1-21]

Pastor Dave Shackle  
June 9, 2019

Across our country and around the world, there seems to be an increasing number of forces and factions that are pulling people apart. Unfortunately, there are individuals and organizations that work extremely hard to foster discord and division among Christians, Muslims, and Jews; between Black and White, rich and poor, gay and straight. Fortunately though, there is a Divine Remedy for such divisiveness: the Holy Spirit's remarkable ability to make us *whole* and to bring us together - to remind us that we are *all* loved and cherished offspring of our One Divine Source. This is the central message and mission to which we as Brecksville United Church of Christ dedicate ourselves - a mission which is stated on the cover of every Sunday bulletin: “Loving, Serving, and Accepting *All* People with God's Life-Changing Power!” That *power*, is the power of the Holy Spirit - the same Spirit who calls us to this mission, and who inspires us to carry it faithfully forward.

On that 1<sup>st</sup> Century Pentecost, the sound and power of a mighty Wind ‘fills the entire house where the believers are sitting; and then that Divine Power pours-out to the streets and into the world! On this 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pentecost, that same Divine Wind and Spirit continues to inspire and empower “the *entire* house” and the entire world! Apparently, the Holy Spirit's intention is that *all* people - not just twelve disciples, not just long-winded preachers, but all people - experience and share that Divine Breath of Life and Love!

Those early believers also see “tongues as of fire, which...rest upon each of them. And *all* of them are filled with the Holy Spirit, and begin to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gives them the ability.” Admittedly, that would have been a really strange experience; yet the purpose of that experience is actually quite simple. The intention of the Holy Spirit on *that* Pentecost, is to make sure that *everyone* be included; that no one miss-out on the Good News because of linguistic, cultural, or social differences. I believe that the Holy Spirit desires the exact same thing on *this* Pentecost: That no one be excluded. That we all remember that we are all members of the One Same Family! And that we put-forth a special effort to reach-out to those Family members who are often pushed-aside because of their gender identity, their social status, their religious, racial or cultural differences.

On Pentecost, those fiery tongues *light* a fire within Christ's followers, igniting their passion and prompting them to proclaim Divine Love in ways that are readily understood by all who gather. And that's an extremely relevant point for you and me to remember today: that it's not the multitudes who learn to speak the language of Christ's followers. Instead, the Holy Spirit inspires those followers to effectively communicate with all those around them. They're surrounded by an eclectic, international, inter-generational crowd; yet somehow they effectively communicate their message to everyone present. It's like the Holy Spirit is the best translation app ever!

That Pentecost Experience is the Holy One's extraordinary way of demonstrating that a Divinely inspired expression of compassion and welcome, inclusion and love is a Universal Language. Because when our hearts are filled with Divine Love, we will find a way to express it, and to make it known to everyone we encounter. We will remove the human-imposed walls and barriers and obstacles that set us apart. We will joyfully recognize all those around us as our genuine sisters and brothers. We will find new and creative ways to translate and communicate, to show-forth and to live-out the Good News of Jesus Christ. And though, at times, our words may be inadequate, our acts of kindness and compassion, openness and love will definitely be understood!

On that first Pentecost, when that multi-cultural crowd hears that Divinely inspired message, they naturally ask, "How is it that we hear, each of us in our own native language?" And though we might reasonably raise that same question today, to do so would be to miss the point. The Pentecostal Experience is the Holy One's way of showing us that whenever Divine Love burns within us, it will find a way to be effectively expressed! Those "tongues of fire" that touch those believers, prompt them to proclaim the Holy One's extravagant welcome in a way that is readily understandable to all!

Likewise today, when the fire of Divine Love burns within us, we begin to warm-up to the notion that "different" doesn't mean "deficient" or "defective" - and that "diversity" truly is a Divine gift and blessing! And when we genuinely desire to speak to people in ways that are welcoming and loving, the Holy Spirit graciously expands our ability to do so. It's kind of like when two people who speak completely different languages, really *want* to communicate. Their precise words may not come across, but their genuine intentions absolutely will. Their tone and temperament will quickly establish whether their intentions are hostile or friendly, manipulative or sincere; just like the tone and temperament of a church lets people immediately know if

it's a community that welcomes and accepts them as they are, or one that has no time, or patience, or room for those who are "different".

On that first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit's less-than-subtle arrival reminds Christ's followers that the love and acceptance that Jesus so graciously extends to them, can only live and grow thrive, as they themselves freely share it with others. On this Pentecost, the Holy Spirit once again reminds you and me of the exact same thing: that it is in and through our own gracious welcome and inclusion, caring and sharing that the love of Christ continues to shine-forth today!