

Title: "Like Wildfire"

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Acts 2:1-4

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Service Readings: Num 11:24-30, Acts 2:1-21, John 7:37-39

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Gathered in one room were the twelve pillars of the church, a church started by Jesus and about to be grown by the Holy Spirit. From out of this room would spread these tongues of fire, like wildfire, until all four corners of the earth would feel his heat. What Jesus had sowed, these apostles had been chosen to grow and to multiply. They may have thought the miracle of the multiplying fish and loaves were amazing, but they would be speechless concerning what was about to take place. In this first day alone they would lay hands on, and baptize about 3000 people. The explosion of this growth was immediate, and it was hot.

By the 11th century, long after these pillars had left this earth, 52 million people would lay claim to following Jesus. But just because the apostles were no longer here, others greats would walk closely in their shoes. People like Origen, Augustine, Cyril, and Ignatius, just to name a few. You don't have to know all about them, but they were Christian giants in this early period.

And then, by the time of the 16th century, 100 million Christians would be spread out throughout most of the North Eastern hemisphere. It would be during this time when people like Luther and Melancthon would make their huge impressions on the pages of this same church history.

And what about recent history? We have seen giants like the Rev. Billy Graham and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. enter and exit the stage, all the while helping to grow the church of Jesus to almost 3 billion people with a reach to every single corner of the world.

And this growth all started by one person who was conceived by.... Who? That's right, the Holy Spirit. And Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and brought into this world the Kingdom of God. And after he suffered under Pontius Pilate, after he was crucified and died, after he was buried, he rose again from the dead. But even though he was to ascend into heaven, he sent to the disciples a gift. That's right. the Holy Spirit, himself. And with the Holy Spirit came all of his power and authority and influence. And it was this Holy Spirit, first received as tongues of fire, that would spark this earth-sized fire, but we already spoke about all that.

What we *haven't* spoken about is how these giants reacted to the success born from the Holy Spirit. Their names are chiseled into the stone of church history but I would argue that none of them would be comfortable with that knowledge. Much like the desires of the Holy Spirit, the aim of these men were to point others to Jesus. They were to diminish so that Jesus would increase. They succeeded in the pointing part, but failed in the diminishing.

But among the land of these giants lived the nameless, smaller people: men, women, and even children who were also filled with the same Holy Spirit. They responded to his promptings and their faith grew. And they put their faith into action, but in a different way than the giants. Instead of writing famous works, instead of leading revolutions, these people were called into a ministry much more.... Ordinary. Their ministries involved caring for their children, leading a church, or working for a company. And the good works that they did in these callings were just as holy, just as important as those that were done by the giants, for these unknown people brought Jesus to others by the kindness, patience, love, and selflessness that they showed to their neighbors. And just like the giants, they didn't seek glory for themselves, but for Jesus instead. And they were the lucky ones because they have long been forgotten, but the work that God has accomplished through them continues to reverberate across the families of those they impacted... even to today.

So, we have talked about the knowns, and we have talked about the unknowns, but we haven't talked about us, the ones that make up the living, breathing church today. We haven't yet acknowledged that we, too are filled with the exact same Holy Spirit that all of these people were. We are as connected to this story of God as these giants are, just as connected as these unknowns are, for we *all* share in one common story line – the indwelling of the same Holy Spirit that was, is, and always will be. This same spirit that was alive in the disciples is alive in us, right now. And just as he pointed them to Jesus, he points us to him, as well. And he prompts us to do what God has called us to do – to love Jesus by serving our neighbors so that others may see this light and be attracted to it. And that is what we all do, every day.

For example, I know a family with Junior High to College age children. Recently they lost their father to a heart attack while he was driving home from work. The Holy Spirit was burning hotly in this family and they were a bright light in this dark world. And on the day of his passing, that light didn't dim, it only grew brighter. And today she continues to pour into her children and those around her the overwhelming volume of faith that she has received. She still mourns but she has picked up her cross and has continued in her ministry as a mother, a homeschool teacher, and a faith guide in her local church. How does she continue day in and day out? She is pointed at Jesus, her eyes affixed to his, and her arms clinging to him. And how is she able to do this? The Holy Spirit. The same spirit that gave the disciples the strength to faith their own trials and tribulations as they did the work of God.

And so, I think that the lesson for us this Pentecost morning is to take a moment and reflect on the reality that this powerful Holy Spirit is alive in each one of us, right now. I would like to extend to you an invitation to think of all that Jesus has accomplished through you because of it. Now, this may sound like an opportunity to pat ourselves on the back, but just as those that have gone before us always pointed their successes and victories to Jesus, so do we. So this is more of an opportunity to thank God for his decision to use us, and reflect on *how* he used us, and to thank him for sending us the Holy Spirit so that we would have the desire to follow his prompting and do the work that

God set aside for us to do. This is an opportunity that we so rarely give ourselves but it is important to do so, because the work we do, the work God gives us to do, is to be done with joy, and also with thankfulness. And so this morning I would like to reflect on that. If only for a brief moment.

Please pray with me.

Lord you sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the disciples, and through baptism you did the same for us. May our hearts be always open to the language that he speaks, that our faith will always increase and that our boldness to proclaim you will never waiver.

Amen.