

Pentecost
From the Bible: Acts 2

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Fifty-seven days after Palm Sunday.
And, fifty-three days after the Last Supper.
And, fifty two days after the crucifixion.
And, fifty days after Easter,
The Christian community gathers to celebrate Pentecost.
The story of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus.
Startling them. Empowering them. Transforming them.
Turning their lives upside down or right side up.
And, sending them out of the room in which they had been meeting and into the world.
The author of Luke's gospel and the Acts of the Apostles tells the story this way.
*The followers of Jesus were all gathered together talking and singing and praying
When suddenly they heard this sound....*

When the Saints Come Marching In

Oh when the saints go marching in
Oh when the saints go marching in
Oh, I want to be in that number
When the saints go marching in

Oh when the sun begins to shine
Oh when the sun begins to shine
Oh, I want to be in that number
When the sun begins to shine

Oh on that hallelujah day;
Oh on that hallelujah day.
Oh, I want to be in that number
On that hallelujah day

Well, maybe not quite that sound.
But, maybe all that captures something of the spirit and the energy of the day.
You can read the official version in Acts 2, but the story goes like something like this:
*After the experience of the resurrection, the followers of Jesus gathered together each day in a
room in Jerusalem to remember and to talk and to pray when suddenly what felt and sounded*

like a mighty wind blew through the room in which they were gathered. And, when they looked around the room at each other what looked like tongues of flames danced above their heads. And, they began to speak about Jesus. Not just in Aramaic or Hebrew or Greek, but in this cacophony of languages so that all the visitors and travelers who were in Jerusalem at the time heard them speaking in their native language.

The story goes on from there.

And, whether it was that day or another. Or, that way or some other way.

Something happened to those followers of Jesus.

Something happened which pushed them past locked doors and onto the city streets.

Something happened which gave them the courage to speak the truth they knew in Jesus.

Something happened which transformed them from disciples to apostles; from followers to leaders. From those who listened and watched to those who did.

Something happened which turned their lives and world inside out and upside down.

And because something did happen, here we are today.

So, as is always the case, here's the thing...

What about today and you and me?

Is this story from Acts a one off. Something which happened then, but never again.

Or, is there something about the Spirit...

Something about God's creative, redemptive, empowering, transforming presence...

That still waits to blow in and through our lives?

And, are there tongues of flames which still wait to dance above your head and mine?

Waiting to move us from here to there.

From inside to outside.

From where we are comfortable and safe to where God wants and needs us to be?

Jill Dillard, the editor of *Presbyterian Outlook*, wrote this in a reflection about Pentecost:

Pentecost is revolutionary because the wind blows down barriers and the flames burn down walls between peoples separated by geography, culture, language, nation, class, race and every other human-created category. Pentecost means that our circles of concern are expanded and multiplied. We are to be bi-lingual, tri-lingual, multi-lingual - always striving to speak more fluently and listen more closely until we come to a place where we know each other's languages so well we dream one another's dreams.

So, as both reminder and encouragement for all you saints who happen to be gathered here today, let's try this again with slightly different words.

Rather than marching in, we are marching out.

Soul on fire and tongues of flames dancing above our heads.

Climbing over and through the rubble of the barriers broken down by the wind of the spirit which blows before us, towards the world God imagines for us and for all.

Closing Hymn: *When the Saints Go Marching Out*

Oh when the saints go marching out
Oh when the saints go marching out
Oh, I want to be in that number
When the saints go marching out

Oh when the trumpet calls sounds the call.
Oh when the trumpet sounds the call
Oh how I want to be in that number
When the trumpet sounds the call!

Oh when the wind begins to blow;
Oh when the wind begins to blow
Oh, I want to be in that number
Oh when the wind begins to blow

Oh when the saints go marching out
Oh when the saints go marching out
Oh, I want to be in that number
When the saints go marching out.