

## Sermon Text – Sunday, May 24, 2026 – Pastor Paula Kraus

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3-13; 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: John 7:37-39**  
**Scripture for Message: Acts 2:1-21 “Amazed and Perplexed”**

It began with wind, blowing and swirling, not unlike the wind that hovered over the waters at the beginning of creation. Once again God creates something new. In the beginning the Spirit of God breathed life into dust and created humanity, at Pentecost the Spirit of God breathes life into Christ's followers including Peter, a once cowardly disciple, enabling him to boldly proclaim God's message to the crowds. This is the work of the advocate, God's Holy Spirit, giving courage to the cowardly and strength to the weak.

Someone once asked me why Jesus thought his followers needed an advocate. Because of the cross – aren't we now able to take our troubles directly to the creator? Why do we need an intercessor – doesn't God hear our prayers? Of course, I don't know the answer to these questions, who can know what Jesus had on his mind when he made the promise of sending an advocate. Who can know what God's plans and purposes are?

So, let's think about the Spirit and think about what happened on that day during Pentecost. It is in the Gospel of John where we read that Jesus consistently promised the Holy Spirit as a divine helper who would dwell within believers, teach them, remind them of Jesus' words, convict the world of sin, and empower them for ministry. But how does this helper or advocate help us today? Here are a few ways Christians believe that the Spirit helps:

- **Permanent Presence:** Unlike Jesus' temporary physical presence, the Spirit dwells within believers forever.
- **Guidance and Truth:** The Spirit of truth helps believers understand and remember Jesus' teachings.
- **Comfort and Help:** The Greek term *parakletos* refers to one called alongside to aid, counsel, and comfort, ensuring believers are not left alone.
- **Intercession:** The Spirit helps believers by interceding for them and providing strength in times of weakness.

In this narrative about the events on that day during Pentecost, we see the creation of something new in the lives of Christ's followers. As those tongues of fire rested on each of them, the Spirit gave them ability to speak in other languages. The crowds who

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heard them heard them in their own native tongues, recognizing that the ones speaking were all “Galileans” and not proficient in multiple languages. We don’t know what they were saying only that “each one heard them speaking in the native language of each,” and they were amazed and perplexed because they heard them speaking about God’s deeds of power. These “Galileans” were preaching the good news in a way that everyone present could understand – that was something new! “The gift of the Holy Spirit, whether with its wind and flame or peace and life-giving breath, changes everything.”<sup>1</sup>

The events at Pentecost are God’s way of allowing his followers to witness diversity and inclusion – the beginning of universal evangelism. By linking this event to Joel’s prophecy, Peter acknowledges the inclusion of all genders, ages, and nationalities. The Spirit transforms, renews, and enables disciples like Peter to help others understand God’s work on earth. It is the intercession or mediation of the Holy Spirit that empowers believers to continue the work Jesus started and enables the church to be “the body of Christ” and to bring God’s kin-dom to earth as it is in heaven.

So, how does all of this fit into God’s plan? I wonder if we can recognize a thread that runs from the beginning of creation, through the Exodus, the events at Mt. Sinai, Jesus’ life, and death, ending with where we are now in the church. We know the Spirit was present in the beginning, working through the creation of all things. The Spirit was present with the Israelites during the Passover and the Exodus from Egypt. Seven weeks after their escape from Israel the people settled at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Pentecost in Judaism is the “Festival of Weeks” seven weeks, and seven in scripture marks completion. This festival of weeks commemorates the spiritual birth of the Jewish Nation when God gave the Ten Commandments and the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Tying this to Jesus’ life, his crucifixion and resurrection occurred during the time of Passover and seven weeks later he ascended to be at the right hand of his Father in heaven – the Spirit came to his disciples on Pentecost the fiftieth day after the resurrection (Pentecost comes from a Greek word meaning *fiftieth*). Passover

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<sup>1</sup> Highsmith, Martha C. “John 20:19-23 – Connecting the Reading with Scripture” *Connections Year A, Vol 2, Lent through Pentecost*. eds. Green et.al. WJK. 2019. Print. 328-330

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was the time that God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, Passover was the time that God rescued the world from slavery to sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost memorializes for Israel the giving of the Torah as a guide to God's will.

Correspondingly, on that day after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Pentecost initiates the giving of the Holy Spirit to counsel the believer according to God's will. Pentecost in the time since Jesus now memorializes the spiritual birth of the church. This is a reenactment and a renewal of God's covenantal promises to the people of God.

Are we amazed and perplexed that God makes all this happen according to the time God has established? Are we amazed and perplexed that God's plan is so strategic? When we see the threads that run through scripture maybe God's promises are easier to acknowledge and understand. The most important promise from the day of Pentecost is this – "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

That's a history lesson but what does that have to do with people in modern times? We know from the events of that day in church history that the Spirit "intercedes" for us when we do not have the words. Intercession that happens when the Spirit guides us to the right words and appropriate actions. The Spirit enabled the early followers of Christ to speak words in languages they did not learn and therefore enabled those listening to understand. The Spirit emboldened Peter to stand and raise his voice addressing those who criticized the eleven.

Having that as our example of God's power, we can draw on the Spirit to enable and empower us in the same way. Some of us might be timid when asked to talk about our faith – it is the Spirit that gives us the courage to speak. When events occur in our lives that we think we are not strong enough to go through, it is the Spirit acting as counselor and guide that gives us the strength to get through what we are going through. When life brings temptations beyond what we think we are capable of withstanding, it is the Spirit that helps us remember God's will and gives us strength to turn toward God.

As a church, the body of Christ, and a family of believers living in the midst of the kin-dom of God, the Spirit empowers us to be

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God's witnesses. When Jesus' commissioned his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations," he wasn't just talking to the twelve, Jesus meant to commission all his followers. In this church we all claim to be ministers of the faith and therefore we must be about the business of the church, the business that Jesus intended for his church to complete. "Go into all the world – teaching them to obey everything I have commanded." Jesus commissions his followers to teach, we do not all have to preach. It is the Spirit that gives us the strength and the power to teach others about God, which is what an advocate does for us.

God's Spirit empowers God's servants to speak God's message to all of God's creation. God's message is a message of love, mercy, justice, forgiveness, compassion, and grace. That is the message the church must teach to all nations – we can only do that with the Spirit's guidance. Mere humans cannot be all those things without something that gives us strength and guidance – that something is an advocate, the Holy Spirit. If we look at the legal implications of the word advocate, we can envision the Spirit as a "paralegal" helping us navigate God's commandments and God's will for the world.

On that day during Pentecost centuries ago, God sent the Spirit to Jesus' followers and created something new. We look at that something new as the beginning of the church universal – the catalyst for the salvation of the world. God sent the Spirit to give all believers ability to speak the message of God's power in languages that all could understand. That is what the Spirit continues to do for us today – the church is here to help bring people into God's kingdom. The Spirit enables the church to do that in diverse ways that will include all people from all nations. The church has grown from those few hundred believers who gathered all together in one place waiting on the Spirit – to millions of people around the globe. That happened because the Spirit enabled believers to communicate God's deeds of power in ways people could understand, in ways that made sense, and in ways that drew people to want to follow God.

We too, like those early disciples, are a called people. The Spirit enables and empowers us for the task of bringing good news to the oppressed, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the

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prisoners, and to provide comfort for those who mourn. This is the work Jesus proclaims he was sent to do; can we continue God's work with the Spirit's guidance?