

Gracious God, speak to us through your Word, and grant us favor such that our heart, our mind, our action, become a reflection of You.

I am glad to be home at Emmanuel – with you. Pam, thank you for this opportunity to be here today. I am especially glad since this week marks 2 years since being ordained to Holy Orders right here at Emmanuel, having been put forward by this faithful community to serve the Church.

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Our reading from Acts tell us that on the day of Pentecost, the people, Jews and non-Jews, were astonished listening to Peter and the Eleven. They were particularly astonished because in their own languages they heard them speaking about God’s deed of power.

Concerned that the people thought the disciples were drunk, Peter addressed them regarding these concerns. He reassured them that his friends were not drunk, but rather filled with a Spirit – like the Spirit prophesied by the prophet Joel.

He then proceeds to tell the people about Jesus.

The story reaches its climax when we are told that on that day about 3000 from the diverse crowd were baptized and became believers.

According to the narrative, this life-changing event was instigated by a “Holy Spirit” that gave Jesus’s friends, his disciples, the ability to speak in ways that gave a diverse and attentive audience the capacity to hear in their hearing, perhaps to feel in their heart, the wonder of God.

What an interesting hook!

Before I go on I want to tell you about my early experience with what folks called the “Holy Spirit”. And it was not as described in Acts.

On many Sundays I went to church with Grandmother. She was Baptist. On this one occasion while the preacher was giving his sermon my Grandmother got up and began to speak in a language that I did not understand, and when she sat down she shook continuously for a few minutes. She was not the only one under the influence. In fact, as I remember, it started with her, and then others in the congregation began to act similarly. A strange language filled the air, folks were hopping around, some were just yelling, and then there was one person who ran up and down the aisle.

This was not the first time I had seen people under the influence of the Holy Spirit. But this was the first time that I witnessed someone that I love filled with the Holy Spirit. I was 11 years old.

And like on previous occasions I was afraid, I was uncomfortable, I was disturbed, I was filled with questions. And more, I did not want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

With time I became very aware when the Holy Spirit was about to make an appearance – either based on the music played, or the by the Preacher’s intonation. Once the clues became apparent I would leave the church and remain outside until it was over.

I wanted nothing to do with the Holy Spirit.

So as I reflected on the Pentecostal Account in Acts, my mind, and my body are instantly transported to my childhood Holy Spirit encounters.

To be sure this for me was a scary place.

And just when I am about to dismiss this account as one only to be experienced and understood by a few – I encounter the words “they heard them speaking about God’s deed of power” in a fresh way.

I hear these words, I repeat these words, and I allow these words to play in my mind over and over.

I examine other biblical translations of this verse.

The Message writes, “They’re speaking our languages, describing God’s mighty works!”

The NIV, “We hear them declaring the wonders of God’s in our own tongues!”

And the King James, “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God”.

So naturally, I ask myself the question,

When have I observe my students experiencing the wonder of mathematics?

As a mathematics teacher I aim to present mathematics in ways that initiate a wonder for its beauty, a wonder for its structure, a wonder for its playfulness, a wonder for its elegance.

Sometimes I do this with a real and interesting problem.

Sometimes I do this by unpacking the genius in a student’s response.

Sometimes I do it by example. On many occasions students have seen me marvel at mathematics. I get so excited, that I need a

moment to just breathe. They often laugh, but on occasion I see a twinkle in their eyes – or better they too are filled with excitement.

As a mathematician I believe that if students are to take up the challenges and experience the joy of mathematics – they must first experience the wonder, the goodness, the magnificence that is mathematics.

That is, if there is no mathematical wonder, it would be very difficult to convince children to study it – to play with it.

Therefore as a teacher, I use mathematical wonder as a hook to draw students into right relationship with mathematics.

It remains true that many students suffer from mathematical anxiety – a fear that makes it easy to be disengaged from mathematics. A fear that blurs mathematical goodness and beauty. A fear that makes the mathematical experience torture. A fear that separate them from the invitational nature of mathematics.

As it turns out I am in good company, renowned mathematician Paul Lockhart writes in his brief account about the state of mathematics education, *A Mathematician's Lament*, the following,

“If teaching is reduced to mere data transmission, if there is no sharing or excitement and wonder, if teachers themselves are passive recipients of information and not creators of new ideas, what hope is there for their students?”

So revealing wonder is my pedagogical hook.

Friends this is the Good News that I see in our Pentecostal Account today. The Holy Spirit is committed to the work that Jesus came into human form to do – and that is to remind us of our rightful

relationship with God – and with one another. And like a good teacher, the Holy Spirit uses Divine Wonder to draw people – all people – into this marvelous experience.

In this particular case, the Holy Spirit empowered a group of Jesus's closest friends to speak in a way such that the story of God's Wonder could be heard.

I have to tell you, I believe that we live in such a time where the need for a Pentecostal Hook is great!

Many are speaking,

Many claim to know the truth,

Many theorize kindness,

Many profess love,

But the result of these sounds seems to result in deeper division – greater separation from one another.

We need a Pentecostal Hook that invite people from the East, from the West, from the North, and from the South into experiences of divine and human wonder. Because despite the current state of our politics, of our justice system, of our discourse, of our fears of the other, of our world – that divine and human wonder is alive. I believe that It is among us, and it is within us.

I proclaim this because of the many biblical and contemporary examples of God showing up in the presence of human despair. We all of a story to tell about the wonder of God and about the wonder of humankind. And we must tell it in the language that is true to who we are. Because I believe that when we do, people will hear. And

when they hear it, these words will draw us into a community that fills us.

So the opportunity for us today is to search for the Pentecostal Hook - the word, the just law, the musical movements, the song, the poetic lyrics, the kind action – that empower us to experience all that is greater than ourselves.

This is my hope for a world that is broken as a result of our rejection of our common heritage, and as a result of our failure to speak the language that has been divinely entrusted to us.

I confess if I were to visit a church like the churches of my childhood I most likely would squirm in my seat in the presence of the Holy Spirit – especially in the presence of its thunderous manifestation. I might even leave.

What is different however is that I am no longer afraid of the Holy Spirit. She has important work to do in and among us. For she possesses a hook of wonder that empowers us to know the essence of God and the preciousness of all of God's creation.

So Come Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit.

Spirit of healing.

Spirit of peace.

Spirit of justice.

Spirit of mercy.

Spirit of grace.

Spirit of love.

Come Holy Spirit.

Let us pray,

Spirit of the Living God fall fresh on us. Fall fresh on us such that your magnificence is brought into our hearing and into our hearts.

Fall fresh on us such that the weight of past failure and hurt do not weigh us down. Fall fresh on us such that a restoration to our full humanity become our expectation, of ourselves, and of one another.

Fall fresh on us such that we always know, in spite of our propensity to turn away, that we are at all times, beloved children of God.

Amen.