

Living in Pentecost – The Fire of Pentecost

June 18, 2017

Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. Acts 2:1-4 NLT

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in the hearts of believers. The events of that day must have been terrifying and strange – a mighty wind, tongues of fire, and people speaking in other languages. Today we ask the question, “Why fire?”

Fire in the Old Testament

Fire events and images are prevalent in the Old Testament. Consider these significant events: Abraham’s covenant ceremony (Genesis 15), Moses and the burning bush (Ex 3:2), the pillar of fire that lead Israel (Ex 13), on Mt. Sinai when the law was given (Ex 19:18, 24:17), at the dedication of the tabernacle (Lev 9:23-24), at the dedication of the temple (2 Chron 7:1-4), on Mt. Carmel with Elijah (1 Kings 18), Elijah’s departure in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2), and the chariots of fire protecting Elisha (2 Kings 6). We also know that the fire of God departed the temple when it was destroyed and Israel went into exile, and the fire never returned.

- What does the fire represent in each of these historical events?
- What do we learn about God in each event? About His presence? His power? His direction?

Fire is also seen as the judgement of God in many instances. Consider fire as it affected the priests who failed to follow instructions (Lev 10:1-2), the members of Korah’s rebellion (Num 16:35), and the Israelites who complained too much (Num 11:1-3). We know that “the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” (Deut 4:24)

- What do we learn about God in these events? About His holiness? About His toleration (or not) of sin?

At Pentecost

John the Baptist said that a baptism of fire was coming (Matt 3:11) and at Pentecost the fire of God re-appeared after 400+ years of darkness. At Pentecost, the fire rested on individuals who believed in Jesus Christ and scripture teaches that the body of a Christian is now the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. (1 Cor 6:19). We are the temple of the living God. (2 Cor 6:19)

- How would you explain the significance of the Holy Spirit now resting on individuals?
- What does it mean that “we are the temple of the Holy Spirit”?

Today

The fire of God, the Holy Spirit, now resides within believers. We have a responsibility to “...fan into flame the gift of God within you...” (2 Tim 1:6-7).

- What are you doing to feed your soul-fire? Do you spend time reading the Bible? Praying? In community with like-minded Christians?
- Are you striving to be obedient to all you know and understand?

Sometimes we do not like the fire of the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit’s role is to convict the world regarding sin, righteousness, and judgement. (John 16:8) Conviction is an uncomfortable feeling. God uses conviction to purify our hearts, to guide us, and to keep us from wrong. “He is like a refiner’s fire” (Mal 3:2) We must learn to accept correction, and respond to the purifying fire. The fire of the Holy Spirit is sometimes like a controlled burn – used to remove distractions, weeds, and things that choke out growth; used to make room for new growth.

- Have you ever felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit? How have you responded?
- Are you aware that every time you ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit, every time you chose to disobey, you are pouring cold water on the fire of your soul?
- What sort of weeds or distractions are in your life, keeping you from new growth?
- Is there an area of your life that needs to be purified?

Join us in the prayer of David, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Ps 51:10-12)