

Sunday, June 11, 2017

Forest Hills United Methodist Church

Pentecost Sunday

Sermon: "Pentecost Jubilee"

Rev. Dr. David Werner

Scripture: Leviticus 25:10-22

Text: Luke 24:49 Jesus said to them, "Look, I'm sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power."

Blurb: As a church we've been talking a lot about discerning God's plan for our church's future. We have a proposal from a group of consultants from the Healthy Church Initiative (HC) offered by our Conference. Their proposal is to declare a year of Jubilee and stop many of our church activities. Instead, the proposal is to focus on the three primary relationships: With God in Sunday worship, With others in Wednesday meal and fellowship, and with our own spiritual deepening in church-wide small groups. This Sunday we celebrate Pentecost (the coming of the Holy Spirit), and we'll look at the how the biblical calling of Jubilee is a Pentecost calling for our church today.

Gathering Upstairs, Standing

In honor of Pentecost and our church addition's 30th anniversary, this Sunday we will begin worship upstairs! After the opening song and prayer, we will then process down to the Sanctuary for the remainder of the service. Those who do not wish to go upstairs can wait for the rest in the Sanctuary.

Gathering Song: *Holy Spirit* -Sanctify

Greeting: Pastor David

Pentecost & Addition Anniversary

Up until thirty years ago, this congregation gathered for worship up here every Sunday. This two-story structure was the church building. Up here was the church's sanctuary. The three rooms behind us were not yet divided, and this bigger room was filled with chairs. The very back room was the kitchen, and off to the outside wall was a small study for the pastor. After worship, tables were put up in this same space, and the congregation ate together. This upper room was for prayer, teaching, worshiping, fellowship and eating.

The congregation, however, needed more space, and so David Ash and Berge Bergerson led the building team for the ground level addition. Thirty years ago today, to the day, on Sunday, June 11, 1987, this congregation dedicated the addition, and worship transferred from this upper room to what is now the sanctuary.

The very first Christians also gathered in an upper room, in Jerusalem. It was the same room that they had celebrated the Last Supper in the night before Jesus was arrested. They returned to the upper room on Easter, and the resurrected Jesus appeared there Easter evening. Jesus appeared to them again there, this time Thomas was able to touch Jesus' scars.

The disciples continued to gather there, even after Jesus had ascended back to heaven. Acts 1:13 says, "Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying."

The upper room was their first building in Jerusalem, for prayer, teaching, worship, fellowship, and eating. Then, ten days after that, on the 50th day after Passover and Jesus' crucifixion, on the Jewish Festival of Pentecost, the first Christians again gathered in the upper room. And on this day, something happened that changed salvation history. Listen to the story from the Bible, Acts, chapter 2.

2:1 When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire resting on each one of them. 4 They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

5 There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. 7 They were surprised and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? 8 How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? ... —we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!" 12 They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, "What does this mean?" 13 Others jeered at them, saying, "They're full of new wine!"

14 Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, "Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! 15 These people aren't drunk, as you suspect; after all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! 16 Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. ...

21 And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved. ...

37 When the crowd heard this, they were deeply troubled. They said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away—as many as the Lord our God invites." ... 41 Those who accepted Peter's message were baptized. God brought about three thousand people into the community on that day.

Today, we again gather in this upper room, as the People of Pentecost. We call upon the name of the Lord! Let's do that together. You say, "We call on Jesus," and I will say, "To be our savior!" We'll do it three times. We'll start with everyone saying, "We call on Jesus." Ready? Here we go:

All: We call on Jesus

David: To be our Savior!

All: We call on Jesus

David: To be our Savior!

All: We call on Jesus

David: To be our Savior!

And, believers in Jesus, on *this* day of Pentecost, in *this* upper room, we have the Holy Spirit given to us. Let's pray, "Holy Spirit....Amen."

Just as those first Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, went downstairs to go and tell about Jesus, so do we today.

Just as the people of Forest Hills, filled with the Holy Spirit, went downstairs into their new sanctuary to tell about Jesus, so do we today.

I'm going to ask David Ash and Berge to lead the way. Then, any who were here 30 years ago, I want you to go next. You moved this congregation into our new addition. You pushed the ministry of this church out of this room, and into the world thirty years ago. Lead it again today! And the rest of us, we will follow, filled with the Holy Spirit and led into a new ministry!

As we gather into the new sanctuary, we will sing *Lighthouse*, for God has made our building, the old and the new, His lighthouse in Forest Lake.

David and Berge, lead the way!

Procession Downstairs to Sanctuary

Worship Set: Sanctify

My Lighthouse

Simple Pursuit

Congregation is seated

Breathe on Me Breath of God

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Kids invited to Kids' Church

Prayers and Lord's Prayer: Andrew

Offering: Joel Sanctify

Love Offering

Sermon Bumper

PP#1: Pentecost Jubilee

Jesus said to them, "Look, I'm sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power." Luke 24:49

Pentecost Jubilee. Luke 24:49 Jesus said to them, "Look, I'm sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power."

Pentecost is really the beginning of Jesus' Church on earth. His first disciples helped Him begin His ministry of ushering in God's Kingdom on earth. But they weren't the Church at first.

Then, in the upper room, He washed their feet and told them, "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other." (John 13:34-35)

Jesus didn't just usher in a new set of beliefs and religious practices. He called His followers to live differently. God's Kingdom comes on earth when we love each other as Jesus loves.

Now, that's pretty radical. That's a crazy way to live. It's counterintuitive. It flies in the face of our emotions, our feelings, our inner wills.

We can't do it. On our own, we can only do it a little. But to love each other with this kind of selfless, giving, sacrificing, committed love, is impossible for us to sustain over time.

That's why, when Jesus went back to glory, He promised that they would receive God's Holy Spirit within them. God's Spirit, God's very presence, the third person of the one God, not just *with* them, not just *on* them, but *in* them. This is what happened at Pentecost, in the upper room. God's Spirit came and filled them. They were no longer led and powered by their own ideas and wills. They now had God's presence within them, to shape their wills, to empower them to do what they could not do on their own, to speak words of life into them, and then make that life real.

This is why Pentecost is really the beginning of Jesus' Church on earth. It is only when the Holy Spirit fills God's people that we can be and live as God's people. That's what the Church is. It is God's people on earth, striving to live and be the way God leads, powered and shaped by His Spirit.

Before Jesus leaves, He warns them not to go and try to do anything on your own, without Him. Just stay. Gather together, and wait for God's Spirit to come to you. Jesus said to them, "Look, I'm sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power." (Luke 24:49)

PP#2: Forest Hills - A Pentecost Church!

All people who give their lives to Jesus are filled with the Holy Spirit. We give ourselves to a way of life that we cannot do in our own will and power. It comes only through the Holy Spirit working with our spirits, changing our wills and empowering our lives. It is Jesus who lives through us, making possible what we cannot do. That is why Christians don't have an excuse. Our selfish will, our rampant emotions, our stubbornness, are all broken. We don't have to follow them. We have God's Spirit within us to live in a different way. When we let that rampant selfishness break out, it is because we have chosen to follow our self will rather than God's will within us.

And so, we need to repent. We need to get re-centered on God. We need to surrender. We need to let His Holy Spirit take over. We fight, most powerfully, on our knees!

And that, Church, is what I think the Pentecost challenge is for us today. We who have given our lives to Jesus, we here at Forest Hills Church, we claim to follow Jesus. We already have the Holy Spirit! It is already ours. Our Pentecost challenge is to let God's Spirit lead us.

PP#3: Pentecost Jubilee

The word Pentecost is a Greek word, that comes from a Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, called the Septuagint. It means "fiftieth," and refers to the Jewish festival on the 50th day after Passover. The festival marked the last of the harvest. When Passover concluded, they were to mark seven weeks, seven sevens, making 49 days. And the day after was "the fiftieth." It was when the Jews were celebrating Pentecost that the Christians also marked the 50th day after Jesus' resurrection. And so when the Holy Spirit came on "the fiftieth," the word Pentecost also became the word for the Christian holiday, marking the birthday of the Church.

Interestingly—and I can't help but see the connection—the Septuagint also uses the word "Pentecost" in the Old Testament. It comes in Leviticus 25. The Book of Leviticus explains all the Jewish laws, rituals, practices, and festivals for the Jews. One of them was Pentecost. But the word

is also used when explaining *the year of Jubilee*. Pentecost was the 50th day after Passover. Jubilee was the 50th year, after seven cycles of seven years.

Just like every week, every seventh day was Sabbath, so with years, every seventh year was a Sabbath year. And after seven Sabbaths of seven years, 49 years, the 50th year was to be a very special year, called Jubilee. Let's take a look at Leviticus 25 and see this Pentecost jubilee.

PP#4: Leviticus 25 (NIV)

God said, "10 Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. 11 The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. 12 For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. 13 In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property."

God said through Moses, "Consecrate the [Pentecost] fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. The [Pentecost] fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property."

PP#5: Leviticus 25 (CEV)

18 "Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. 19 Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. 20 You may ask, 'What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?' 21 I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. 22 While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

Verse 18, "Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. You may ask, 'What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?' I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in."

PP#6: Jubilee: A Pentecost Sabbath Year

1. Intended to reconnect with God
2. It is a return to the way things ought to be
3. Break from the regular work and routine
4. Break from trusting in our work
5. A promise for a good future
6. The work of the past will continue to bear fruit
7. Instead spend your focus on God

I think it is no coincidence that God sent His Holy Spirit on Pentecost, after seven cycles of seven. And in the Old Testament, Jubilee is a Pentecost Sabbath Year.

We see from this chapter, that Jubilee is intended to help God's people reconnect to Him. It is a return to the way things ought to be: families rejoined, property returned, a restoration across the land.

It is a break from the regular work and routine. It is holy, meaning that it is about God, and the break is intended to put people back in right relationship with God. It is a way to break the trust in what people do, and instead to restore trust in God's provision.

Jubilee, and following God's cadence of life, is a promise of a good future. The work done in the past will continue to bear fruit, even when not doing it. You will be provided for. Spend the time instead with God!

PP#7: 50th Birthday of Forest Hills Church!

Today marks the 30th anniversary of our building addition. We celebrate Pentecost as the birthday of God's Church on earth. But this year, 2017, also marks the 50th birthday of this congregation! The 50th anniversary is December 10, also, again, on a Sunday. Save that day for a great celebration. And from now until then, in honor of our 50th, we will be having guest pastors and preachers come back to preach. It begins on July 23 with the Rev. Dr. Peter Law coming back to preach. He was the pastor here when this addition was built!

PP#8: Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) Proposal

A Jubilee Sabbath

1. Break from our normal work
2. Rekindle our passionate spirituality
3. Simple, soulful, Sunday worship
4. Food and intergenerational fellowship Wednesday evenings
5. Streamlined small groups for everyone

This past year, as we've been walking with Jesus, we've also been discerning our church's future. How is God calling Forest Hills to be His Pentecost church here in Forest Lake? We've done a lot of self-study. We've had surveys and assessments. We brought in some outside eyes—leaders from the Conference to help us see what we struggle to see. Our commitment is that this church belongs to Jesus, and we will do anything—anything—to follow Him. That means that we have agreed put everything on the table, all that we are, all that we do, all that we will be. We've surrendered it all to Jesus, and have committed, "Do with it, with us, as you will."

And the HCI team has proposed a Jubilee for our 50th year.

They heard us plainly. We told them that we are tired, frustrated, and have a spiritual hunger. They have said that we are a good church. We do so many things right. But they fear we have gotten too busy. We have spread ourselves too thin. We are trying to do so much—all good stuff—and that we have a need to rekindle our first love with Jesus.

It's our 50th anniversary. Our church's life cycle is past it's peak. We need to renew our identity, our primary connection with Jesus.

Our jubilee is a call to reconnection with God. It is a return to the way things ought to be. We do that, as a church, by taking a break from all our regular work and routine. We break from trusting in what we do, and instead put our trust back in Jesus. It's a risk, but God promises a good future.

The work of the past will continue to bear fruit. Instead, for a time, we put our primary focus on God. Jubilee. Pentecost.

We will do this in three ways, the prescription says. They have prescribed a Jubilee of church-wide commitment to simple, soulful Sunday worship. We all commit to up our attendance, and to make worship intergenerational. They have prescribed a Jubilee of church-wide commitment to intergenerational fellowship and eating together Wednesday evenings. We all commit to up our attendance Wednesday evenings, and to make it for everyone, fun, and formative. And thirdly, they have prescribed a Jubilee of church-wide commitment to streamlined small groups. We all commit to be a part of three short cycles of groups, all of us doing the same curriculum.

These become our Jubilee focus. All the rest, we are willing to let go. It's a calling to be led by the Holy Spirit. It is a calling to restore our connection back to God. The time is right. The time has come.

I'll preach on all this again next Sunday, and I'll talk about why I think this is the right direction for us as a church. I'll also try to give some idea of what this could look like. But before that, this upcoming week, we're also hosting cluster meetings, for us to gather in smaller groups to explore what this means for us. Sign up for one, the sign-ups are in the lobby. There is one right after worship today, if you can stay. There is one this evening. More each day this week. Be sure to attend at least one.

Then, having prayed and discerned together, we will have a Church Council on Sunday, June 25, immediately following worship, to have an all-church vote on this proposal. Be sure to come if you can.

PP#9: Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.
 Leave to thy God to order and provide.
 Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
 To guide the future, as He has the past.
 Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
 Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.

Pentecost. We have been furnished with heavenly power. It changes who we are, and it changes how we do everything we do every day. This proposal for our church is an invitation to get re-centered on God. It is a surrender, letting His Holy Spirit take over. It's staying with God.

And this is true for each of us, in our own lives. We are Pentecost people, you and I. We follow Jesus. And we have been filled with the Holy Spirit. And that changes who we are, and all that we do every day. To celebrate Pentecost today, we don't just mark it's anniversary. We also invite the Holy Spirit to be real in us, to take over. We commit to get re-centered on God. We surrender our stubborn selfishness. We commit to live in a way we cannot on our own.

We have the Holy Spirit! It's already ours—in us! Our Pentecost challenge is to let God's Spirit lead us, fully. Be still thy soul: the Lord is on thy side. Leave to thy God to order and provide.

Pentecost. Sabbath. Jubilee. Come, Holy Spirit, come!
 Amen.

Closing Song: *Be Still My Soul* Sanctify

Benediction: Pastor David

Sunday, June 11, 2017

Pentecost

30th Anniversary of Forest Hills' Addition

Worship beings Upstairs

In honor of Pentecost and our church addition's 30th anniversary, this Sunday we will begin worship upstairs! After the opening song and prayer, we will then process down to the Sanctuary for the remainder of the service.

Those who do not wish to go upstairs can wait for the rest in the Sanctuary.

Those in the sanctuary are asked to begin in meditation and prayer. Below is a transcription of the worship that will take place upstairs. Those in the sanctuary may use it to begin in meditation and prayer.

Gathering Song: *Holy Spirit*

Greeting: Pastor David

Pentecost & Addition Anniversary

Up until thirty years ago, this congregation gathered for worship up here every Sunday. This two-story structure was the church building. Up here was the church's sanctuary. The three rooms behind us were not yet divided, and this bigger room was filled with chairs. The very back room was the kitchen, and off to the outside wall was a small study for the pastor. After worship, tables were put up in this same space, and the congregation ate together. This upper room was for prayer, teaching, worshiping, fellowship and eating.

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5 There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them

speaking in their native languages. 7 They were surprised and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? 8 How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? ... —we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!” 12 They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, “What does this mean?” 13 Others jeered at them, saying, “They’re full of new wine!”

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All: We call on Jesus

Pastor David: To be our Savior!

All: We call on Jesus

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All: We call on Jesus

Pastor David: To be our Savior!

And, believers in Jesus, on *this* day of Pentecost, in *this* upper room, we have the Holy Spirit given to us. Let’s pray,

[Prayer for the Holy Spirit to come upon us again.]

Just as those first Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, went downstairs to go and tell about Jesus, so do we today.

Just as the people of Forest Hills, filled with the Holy Spirit, went downstairs into their new sanctuary to tell about Jesus, so do we today.

I’m going to ask David Ash and Berge to lead the way. Then, any who were here 30 years ago, I want you to go next. You moved this congregation into our new addition. You pushed the ministry of this church out of this room, and into the world thirty years ago. Lead it again today! And the rest of us, we will follow, filled with the Holy Spirit and led into a new ministry!

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David and Berge, lead the way!

Procession Downstairs to Sanctuary