

“Living the Dream”

Acts 2:1-21

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Last Friday, my son Jacob asked me to go out and check the mail box whether there was any new mail for him. I knew that he was waiting for his best friend, EJ’s birthday party invitation! When I opened the mail box, I found mail for him. It was an invitation. The envelope says, “Master Jacob and his family. You are invited to EJ’s fifth birthday party!” The cover graphic was one of Jacob’s favorite characters, *Transformer Optimus Prime*. Jacob was overjoyed and proudly showed it to his mom. Jacob has changed his favorite characters during the last four years. He started with Fireman Sam, Jack Pirate, Transformers, Spiderman and now he is a big fan of Iron Man. While we were traveling in Korea, we watched a movie, Avengers 2. He became a big fan of Iron Man. At last year’s birthday party, he made a birthday wish. He told us that he wanted to become a spider man in the future. Youngjae still doesn’t understand why the boys love robots and dream to be a hero, but his answer was quite simple and clear. He likes to rescue people.

Well, have we been rescued? Today is Pentecost Sunday. What comes up in your mind when you think of Pentecost? In today’s reading, there are important words: The gift of the Holy Spirit, flame, blowing wind and dreaming. These are important elements of a birthday party! Historically speaking, the day of Pentecost is closely related to the Church’s birthday. The concept of the church began on this day of Pentecost. In the church tradition, today is the fiftieth day after Easter and all churches in the world celebrate today as the church’s beginning. So today we are here to celebrate the “Birthday of the Church”. The church has asked you to wear a red color shirt or any colorful outfit because it is today’s special dress code! Thank you for your cooperation! This morning, I invite us to explore Pentecost.

The word “Pentecost” comes from the Greek word which means “fifty.” Pentecost is the fiftieth day after Easter and ten days later after Jesus ascended to heaven. Today’s Scripture reading describes what happened on the fiftieth day in the gathering among the Apostles and followers of Christ. Another version of our Scripture from the Message describes the day of Pentecost. When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of

different languages as the Spirit prompted them. There are three important things here: The Holy Spirit, Sound like a strong blowing wind, and Speaking in a number of different languages. What a strange list for a birthday party! What does this mean?

Let us go deeper to find more spiritual insights. In the Old Testament, God's presence stories were always accompanied by natural phenomena. The sign's purposes were to deliver God's special message as the new Covenant for God's people. What does God want us to catch and learn from the day of Pentecost? Two things: The gift of the Holy Spirit and living the dream. There were fifty days of chaos between Easter and Pentecost. Disciples and followers of Christ had been confused and challenged by the absence of Jesus in their real lives. The Christian communities were gradually questioning and started doubting the presence of Jesus Christ. Some Christians abandoned their faith and some were still struggling with theirs. The Holy Spirit like a strong wind stirred their hearts and souls on this day. The experience of God is not always sweet to our taste. Rather it may surprise us or shake us like a violent wind. But it always awakens us to make things right! What is the consequence of receiving the Spirit? Our Scripture reading says, "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability". The point of receiving the Spirit and speaking in tongues are not creating chaos but the beauty of diversity and unity in Christ.

What are the proofs of a spirited filled Church and person? If our church is a spirit filled church or you are a spirit-filled person, you will not give up on yourself, but start dreaming a dream. When we receive the Spirit, we do not stay in despair nor complain about reality, but start thinking of positive attitude and new possibilities. When Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit, he had courage to stand and addressed the crowd saying, "We Christians are not drunk but filled with the Holy Spirit. Friends, if God pours out the Spirit upon all flesh, our daughters and sons shall prophesy, our young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved". How does Peter's address challenge us and our church?

We often say that church is not a building but people of God and followers of Christ. But we seldom talk about the difference between a Church filled with spirit or not. What does a spirit filled church look like? It is all about dreaming. If a church is in Christ with lively spirit, that church will grow towards maturity, reach out to the community and make a difference in its neighborhood. But a church without God's spirit has no desire to reach out to the neighbors, always complains about reality but doesn't want anything for the future and always talks about the past. This reflects no interested in Others, but always interested

in the Me! Jesus challenges us to receive the Holy Spirit and to fulfill his unfinished dream. He invites us to join Pentecost people.

I challenge us to think about our own church's dream for the future as Pentecost people. As one of the few reconciling congregations in our Methodist world, what dream can we dream for God's Kingdom? What ministry, vision and plan are we making for transformation of our community and society? Personally I don't want our church to be only a social and political oriented church, but spirit filled proclaiming and dreaming God's Kingdom as Jesus dreamed. Picture a wall in your mind, Christ Jesus invites us as His partners to join his ministry and break that wall together, what will the wall look like in our real world? While I was preparing my message, I found two contemporary hymns around this theme. One song, written by Mark Miller, is "Christ has Broken Down the Wall". The words go like this: Christ has broken down the wall; we are to be united. We're accepted as we are and reconciled through God's love. Reconciled, we will cast aside fears; freely share peace and love. Because Christ has broken down the wall, God calls us to tear down every wall that divides us. The other song is composed by Shirely Erena Murray. The title is "For Everyone Born". Maybe we will sing this song together on the first Sunday at the communion table. The words go like this:

For everyone born a place at the table.

For everyone born clean water and bread.

A shelter, a space, a safe place for growing

For everyone born a star overhead.

For woman and man a place at the table.

Revising the roles deciding the share

With wisdom and grace dividing the power

For woman and man a system that's fair.

For just and unjust a place at the table

Abuser abused with need to forgive. In anger in hurt a mindset of mercy

For just and unjust a new way to live.

To live without fear and simply to be

To work to speak out to witness and worship for everyone born the right to be free

And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace. Yes God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy.

(CCLI Song # 4065414)

On this exciting day of Pentecost, May God bless you and your hearts so that you receive the Holy Spirit. On this special day for the Church, we are all invited to dream God's dream and be rescued. I hope and pray that we all gladly accept this invitation together. Amen.