

Pentecost  
May 31, 2020

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Acts 2:1-21

### “What is Happening”

*When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

If headlines were a thing on that first Pentecost, a good one might have read: What in the world is happening? A sound, like a mighty rushing wind, filling the house and the people? Tongues like fire? Common folks speaking in languages they couldn't possibly know telling of the mighty works of God? And people not only hearing it, but understanding it? What was this and why was it happening?

Fast forward to the COVID-19 world of today and the headline could be the same. In just a few months this virus has spread throughout the entire world. It has killed over 350,000 people—over 100,000 in the United States. This country, like so many others, is on the edge. Millions of people have lost their jobs. Thousands of small businesses have closed. Food prices are rising. Political tensions are high, as is misinformation and a clear direction for moving forward. Uncertainty rules the day and people are anxious. “What in the world is happening?”

I certainly remember a more certain and simple time growing up in small town NC. Me and my friends rode our bikes all over the place. We stayed outside all day in the summer until we heard the call that it was time to come in for dinner. We would eat, and most of the time go back outside. In the fall, I remember all those tackle football games we played

on our front lawn. It was long and wide, which meant we could run routes as hard as we could. Of course someone always seemed to get the breath knocked out of them, but we friends survived.

Speaking of friends, if you wanted to see each other, you just went over to their house and knocked on the door. If their parent didn't want you there, they would tell you to come back another time and that was that. Because the truth is, we saw each other a lot.

We went to school together. We played on rec. sports teams together. We were in the same scout troop, and many of us went to church together. And while we had a lot to keep us busy, we also took time to just hang out and make our own fun. Of course, that meant doing things we shouldn't have been doing like that time we built a ramp and tried to jump my dad's riding lawn mower (sorry Dad). But looking back, things were just so different in my little piece of the world. I had my problems and my adolescent worries like everyone else, but all in all life seemed pretty easy and refreshingly simple.

And the truth is, for quite a while, I didn't really think that much about those formidable childhood days this way. They just happened and were gone. But probably like many of you, now, I look back on that time and realize how great those days really were.

Now I admit what I'm about to say is a general statement that is not true in every part of this country, but today, it's not the same. Young kids running all over town on their own is not a good idea. Unannounced friends knocking on doors attempting to set up their own play dates is not cool. Neighborhoods are packed with houses, but people tend to keep to themselves. And this has only been magnified over the past few months. Don't get me wrong, we had to do it for the good of our community, but by taking refuge in our homes for so long, trying to avoid as much of the outside world as we could, I worry about our kids. I mean, they already live

in a world where lockdown drills at schools and code red alerts are normal. Now, through no fault of their own, even the youngest of school children have become slaves to the computer because that's the only way for school to continue. And those parents or older siblings at home? They've become teacher's aides on top of everything else they have to do. Add to it the new norm of social distancing, masks in public, crowds of 10 or less indoors, and 25 or less outdoors, and it all begs the question, "What in the world is happening?"

But we can't go back in time, can we? Like me, you might long for those days of the past when things were not as messy and uncertain as they are today. And you don't have to be 50, or 80, or 30 to feel this way. You can be a college student, a high-schooler, a middle school student, or even a kindergartener and feel this way. Because the truth is all of us live in a different world today. A different world from 40 years ago—a different world from 4 months ago. We know it because we can see it. And at the moment this world feels very real.

And yet, as those with faith in Christ, there is another world. But this one is not as easy to see. Because all the mess from the world that feels so real gets in the way and makes things fuzzy. Not just the mess that a new virus has created, but the mess that all sin and all death, that left on its own, can blind us from seeing anything else. But this other world is actually the most real. And yet to see it clearly, we need a different set of eyes— a different way of looking at what God has revealed.

And that difference began with God the Holy Spirit descending on that first Pentecost. It changed the world of those who received it, and it changed the world of those who heard of the mighty works of God. It changes your world and mine too. Because through the gift of faith, that most real world—a world free from sin and death is one that God, in Christ, promises, and is preparing for those put their hope and trust in him. Do you hear the wind? Maybe not a mighty and rushing one, but sometimes just the whisper of a word? Do you see the fire? Maybe not a great display like on

that first Pentecost, but do you see the presence of a God who loves you in your life? Do you hear the voices right here in this little part of the world, and from the countries all around the world, telling of the nightly acts of God? Do you see through what may seem like the worst of times, with all of its uncertainty and heartache, and catch a glimpse of the world of the poured out Spirit of the Lord? I sure hope so. Because that is the world that is the most real, my friends.

Our memories, our opinions, even our daily experiences may tell us differently. But they have nothing on the gracious reign of God, who through his spirit, breathes the life of faith into you and me. He's who helps us see.

So, what in the world *is* happening? Well, things are pretty messed up, just as they've been since the fall into sin. And yet at the same time, the Spirit is alive and active. He points us to Jesus who saved us from our sins with his suffering and death on the cross. He works through God's word when we hear it with our ears, when we read it with our eyes, when we are claimed by it in the waters of Holy Baptism, and when we receive it in Holy Communion.

My fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter what this world may look like or feel like, be assured that the Spirit of the Lord is carrying on his work. His work of calling. His work of gathering. His work of strengthening our faith and keeping us in this life, today and forever. **Amen.**