

Pentecost Sunday School Lessons

Sermon Series: "Psalms of the Spirit"

Date: June 8th

Topic: Witness and Testimony

Open with prayer

Before reading...

When have you shared your story of faith with someone other than a pastor or family member?

Main Scripture: Psalm 100 and Acts 2:1-4

(Reading is attached)

Opening Questions:

- What is the main point of this Psalm?
- How does the Acts passage show the difference before and after the Spirit is embraced?
- How do these passages relate to one another?

A Church in Transition:

We many times make the assumption that we are the first people to encounter hardship we are facing at a particular moment. And while it is true that the cultural setting and the precipitating factors vary widely from situation to another, almost always the struggles and difficulties being faced by one group have been faced by others many times before. The church of Acts 2 (the disciples and other followers of Jesus) is afraid and trapped. They are waiting for the fate of Jesus to become their fate: arrest, trial, and execution. However, Jesus told the disciples that a powerful force was coming and would continue to speak to them, even in Jesus' absence. While they had been told to take the message of Jesus into the world, they remained in their isolated upper room. Finally, as the city of Jerusalem filled for the next major Jewish festival the Holy Spirit filled the room where the disciples and other followers were gathered. Suddenly, as they begin to trust in God again, the disciples and people gathered go forth into the city to share all they have experienced. Not simply telling their stories, but singing praise to God and inviting others to share the love that has been extended to all.

1. When have you felt the Spirit of God move in a bold way?
2. What changes in the disciples to allow them to go forward into the world?
3. Can you identify with their feelings of entrapment?

Scripture commentary:

Psalms are often filled with strong proclamations about the glory and promises of God. For the writer of Psalm 100, the most important aspect of a faithful life is giving praise to God no matter the situation. For the writer, there is nothing more important than for the people of God to praise their creator under all circumstances. The Psalm opens with the writer stating strongly that the people God should always make joyful noises and comes

into God's presence with praise and singing. Moreover, the Psalm urges people to remember the "natural order": that God is the creator and humanity is the "sheep" of God's pasture. While many Psalms cry out for justice or lament some kind of sin, Psalm 100 is a pure statement of God's glory and praise. There is no pretext or deeper subtext. The writer wants the reader to understand the depths of God's relationship with humanity and the joy of responding in praise.

- Why is it important to continue to praise God, even in difficulty?
- How is this Psalm different from others we have read recently?
- How does this idea of praise connect to the Holy Spirit?

Reflection:

The day of Pentecost marks a turning point in the role of humans in the spreading of God's message. No longer is it strictly in the teaching of law, but now it is in the sharing of God's spirit. While the Psalmist proclaims that God's people must continue to praise no matter what, the writer of Acts shares the story of the disciples leaving their captivity. While they had experienced the power of Jesus' love personally, it was not until they felt the continued power of God's presence that they were willing to leave their "safe place" and venture out into the world. For God's church in the present world, this message must not be lost. While the world has in many ways been made smaller and smaller, the relationship between the church and the culture continues to evolve. If the church of God is going to avoid becoming irrelevant, it must be willing to follow the Spirit into the streets, not just to its own pews. We must not only constantly praise the Lord, but also seek to follow the Spirit in the new directions it will lead.

- When did the Holy Spirit put you on a different path?
- Why is it important to feel God's presence? What happens when the church loses sight of God's mission?
- How has the tension of cultural shifts and transitions placed the church and its people on the outside?

Closing:

Consider this question:

How can you best share your story of faith in light of the example of the psalmist and disciples?

Close with prayer.

Psalm 100

¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

²Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

³Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

⁵For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

act 2:1-4

2When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.