

Sermon Starter – The Renewal Movement of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-21, Psalm 104:24-35, Romans 8:22-27, John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15, Ezekiel 37:1-14

The record of Pentecost in Acts shows the surprising entrance of the Holy Spirit. The revealing of tongues and supernatural signs was surely not what the gathered followers of Jesus expected. Yet their posture of prayer and community seems to have set the stage for them to connect their experience with the well-known prophecy in Joel, and the words with which Jesus had left them. All the Pentecost texts speak to the ongoing, creative movement of the Spirit leading to renewal.

In the Ezekiel passage, the breath of the Spirit invites the prophet into the process of bringing life to impossibly dry bones; in the psalm, the renewal of creation is celebrated as the fruit of the Spirit's creativity, with the emphasis on verse 30, "When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground." The John text shows Jesus hinting at his interrelatedness with the Spirit and the Father-words the disciples would begin to grasp in hindsight. The passage from Roman shows the invitation for us to rely on the Spirit, in the midst of the groans for redemption evident all around us.

Each text offers invitations to a deeper spiritual life. The Spirit cannot be boxed in or pinned down, yet offers us a dynamic, reciprocal relationship. Together with the creative Spirit we move through times of longing, waiting, hoping, recognizing, and renewal in both our personal and collective journeys.

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