



“Guided in The Truth”
Rev. Bradley L. DeHaven
St. Andrew’s United Methodist Church
San Antonio, Texas
Sunday, June 4, 2006

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

There aren't too many times when preachers get the opportunity to preach two different sermons on the same Sunday. It's a little different for us on Sunday mornings and Sunday nights but on a Sunday morning when we have two different services going on, ordinarily what I preach in here I try real hard to preach at the 10:50 service, but we have something else going on today at 10:50 and I wanted to make sure that you knew about that and that is our confirmation service. We have four youth being confirmed as it was mentioned earlier in our prayer time.

But because today is Pentecost, today is a special day in the life of the church. As a matter of fact there was a point in time in church history when Pentecost ranked right up there with Easter. It was the most important day in the Christian calendar. It was much more important than Christmas ever was. Pentecost was the birthday of the church, so Happy Birthday! Happy Birthday! Yeah! You all aren't really thrilled, are you? Happy Birthday! Oh yeah, another one, here we go, thanks, thanks for reminding me. No, today is the birthday of the church. Today is the birthday that we celebrate the beginning, as George prayed in his pastoral prayer, the ecclesia, the idea that we are the community of believers gathered together in his name and that bonds us together and holds us together from now until eternity passes. Thanks be to God! Today is the birthday of the church. What a day to celebrate. It's the birthday of the church and the very first birthday present we ever got was the Holy Spirit. What a gift! What a gift!

Some of you have seen this already. I'm wearing my Pentecost tie. It's a Tabasco tie. I figured tongues of fire. This is as close as I can come to tongues of fire. But there's something about Pentecost when the spirit descended upon that group of people, that motley crew of fishermen and tax collectors and so on and so forth in that Upper Room. They gathered there and they didn't know what to expect and suddenly the Spirit came upon them and filled them and blessed them and the church exploded, burst at the seams. Would that we could do that again today. That's the prayer of every pastor. Every single pastor that I've ever met or ever known always prays for that same thing that we could experience that same spirit, that same fire, that same explosive Pentecost. Happy Birthday!

I have a book in my office and for the life of me this morning cannot remember the author of it, but it's a book written by Dennis Bennett. The book is entitled "Nine O'clock in The Morning." It's an odd title, I know, but it's called "Nine O'clock in The Morning" and the guy was an Episcopalian priest. He has since deceased. He was an Episcopalian priest just about as stodgy as can be, just a conservative...well, not really conservative, but just about as Episcopalian as you could ever imagine and had never really seen great success in his church. People came, he did weddings, he did funerals, he did some baptisms and he did very few professions of faith, typical of most mainline protestant churches that weren't growing.

In the Pacific Northwest he encountered a couple that came to his church that were Pentecostal Episcopalians. Now if you don't know a whole lot about denominationalism, let me share with you that Pentecostals for you all would be way out yonder on the right and the Episcopalians are somewhere over here on the left and when you get the two together... Dennis Bennett didn't know how to deal with this couple when they came to his church. They came and they shared their spiritual views. They wanted to know whether or not he had ever been saved. He said, "Well of course." "Have you ever received the Holy Spirit and been able to do the things that

the Holy Spirit can have you do” and he said, “Well, I don’t know, I suppose.” They said, “We don’t think so. Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to come into your life?” and he kind of balked and they said, “What’s stopping you?” And he went away from that meeting of visiting these folks who had just come to his church one time and he was very unsettled, more so than he had ever been in his life. He didn’t know how to deal with this couple. They showed up in church the next Sunday and so he felt obliged that he needed to talk to them a second time and the more he talked to them the more he really began to crave what they had and it wasn’t as if it were a possession that they owned, it was a gift that they had received and welcomed completely.

Some six weeks or so later he finally agreed he needed to do that prayer that they were talking about in their first meeting, to ask the Spirit to come into him and wouldn’t you know it, it took him by surprise. He began to sense the working of the Holy Spirit in his life like he had never had before and it showed in his church. His church went from about 200 and some odd active folks to well over 3,000 within a period of about six months because people are attracted to that like moths are to a light. They are attracted to that because they sense the Spirit alive and that church exploded and the Diocese of Seattle didn’t know how to deal with this guy. They had never had an Episcopal church go like that, grow that fast. And you know the Pacific Northwest tends to be politically rather liberal, the farthest thing from Pentecostal conservatism that you could ever get and here they’ve got this church that has been for the longest time rather staid and is now alive and vibrant and the Diocese didn’t know what to do with him so their Bishop moved him to northern California. Guess what? The Spirit followed him or maybe led him and the church that he went to in northern California did the same thing.

Did the church in Seattle die? No, it’s still going. And from this experience, he wrote a book called “Nine O’clock in The Morning.” He shared what had happened to him and how God had spoken through him and had worked through him and in his church to set it on fire for the Holy Spirit. The title by the way, “Nine O’clock in The Morning” do you remember Peter’s sermon at Pentecost and they said, “Amazing! What has happened to this group of people? What’s going on here for we understand what they are saying, they’re speaking in different languages and we understand them and some scoffed and said aw they’re just filled with new wine” and Peter stood up and said, “My dear friends, they are not drunk as you suppose, it’s only nine o’clock in the morning.” and the spirit had come upon them for this is what happened that the prophet Joel had prophesied about. It’s Pentecost. They had a Pentecostal experience in that church and it all began because the pastor had a Pentecostal experience, a staid Episcopalian. Starch and stale had a Pentecostal experience and the church was blessed.

I wonder sometimes this whole issue of Pentecost, we do Pentecost for one day a year and then we don’t talk about it a whole lot more after that. We can handle the Holy Spirit on one Sunday a year and that’s about enough, then let’s go back to talking about Jesus or let’s go back to talking about God. Let’s go back to talking about the church as usual. Preacher, preacher, preach on those parables again because I really like... yeah the Spirit, that’s okay, but let’s go back to the stuff that I really like, the things that I’m comfortable with. We give our annual nod to the Spirit on Pentecost and that’s it.

I’m going to bold to say I think it’s because we’re afraid of it. I am. None of us likes to be out of control. None of us likes to be the one who’s not in the driver’s seat. None of us likes to be the one who’s not making the decisions. None of us likes that because it’s scary. Ask Jan. She is usually the passenger when I’m driving. She’s petrified most of the time. I don’t think I’m a bad driver. But when we’re not in control we’re afraid. Be honest with ourselves, we are. Because if the Holy Spirit ever got a hold of us and did what God would want us to do in the Holy Spirit’s power,

we're not so sure that we would like to appear that way. We might lose our friends or our social standing or folks might talk about us or.... we're afraid.

Pentecost is a scary time because as long as we can compartmentalize it to one Sunday we can tolerate it. It's that pill we have to swallow only once a year, preacher, and we'll take care of it and that'll be all right. But what would happen if, what would happen if we had a nine o'clock in the morning experience as the body of Christ that lasted not just one day a year? What would happen if this place was filled with the rush of a violent wind? What would happen? What would happen if we went out from this place so infused by the Holy Spirit that we were not in control and the world knew it? What would happen? What would happen if the God who created this wonderful world actually was in control even of our own lives?

That, my dear friends, is what Jesus was introducing to these disciples in that Upper Room the night before he died. I cannot leave. If I leave you'll get the Holy Spirit. If I stay, you don't; therefore, I have to leave, I cannot stay behind because the advocate is coming. How many times did Peter encounter folks who had been baptized but not in the Spirit? How many times did Peter, and Paul, how many times did Paul come across folks who had never been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Oh they'd been baptized in John, you know, with water. They had the water down but they didn't have the Spirit. They didn't even know there was a Spirit.

My dear friends, how many people today pretend or act as though there isn't a Spirit, they didn't even know there was a Spirit. There is a Holy Spirit and every time that a Christian is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit fills that person and claims that person. When are we going to, as the Church, start to live like that, filled with the Holy Spirit, guided in the Spirit blessed by God so that we could literally become what we were created to be. That's what Pentecost is. And that's why in the early church Pentecost was the most significant holiday, Holy Day, there ever was because that was when the church really became. I use that word very specifically. It's a form of the verb to be. Do you remember God's name, God's name that he gave Moses first person singular form of the verb to be, **I Am**. At Pentecost the Church is.

I pray for you, I pray for you that you would be filled with the Holy Spirit, not just today but every day and that we would all come to know what God wants us to be and strive toward it. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, guided in that Spirit. Amen!