

Today we celebrate the Day of Pentecost. It is a day to focus on the Holy Spirit. The gospel of John more than any others is known for being spiritual. You might say John's gospel is for the dreamers and those who can let their imaginations go.

What do you think of when you imagine things of the spirit? Maybe you think of things that are not easily defined. Perhaps you think of paranormal occurrences like on the television show Supernatural which depicts brothers Sam and Dean chasing down the things of the spirit in a 1967 Chevy Impala. Perhaps you think of a state of being that an individual attains through disciplined introspection. Or because you are present in this worship experience you are thinking of what scripture says of the Spirit.

The story in Acts is a spectacular demonstration of the Spirit. If we only read the story in Acts we might associate new birth in the Spirit with a specific kind of religious experience, such as having strong conviction like Peter, or sensing the awakening of faith like the many who heard the good news each in their own language. If we only read Acts we might be tempted to think that things of the Spirit have to be spontaneous and filled with excitement like the novelty of tongues of fire dancing on heads. But in the gospel of John the Spirit is at work revealing Jesus through the word to those who have faith to comprehend.

#### SLIDE 1 – A meal

In the scripture from the gospel of John, chapters 13-17, Jesus is gathered with his disciples around a table. Knowing that he has come from God and is going to God, Jesus spends his last evening with his own dear followers. He eats with them. He washes their feet. He gives them a new commandment, that they are to "love one another" with Christ-like love. He talks with them about his relationship with the Father and the Spirit. He promises them "another Advocate", and he intercedes for them and for those who will come to believe through them.

All of this takes place around an ordinary meal, with its simplicity and intimacy. When it comes to saying and doing what is most important Jesus gathers his disciples around the intimacy of a meal. He gathers with them in a relational setting where their learning can expand. Jesus once again emphasizes that whatever the future brings it will be defined by the love of God.

that he says and does. They are joined to Jesus through love and the gift of faith. Their instruction is not just an intellectual affair it has to do with the emotional bonds that are formed between the teacher and the students.

Neuroscientists who study brain-to-brain synchrony have found that the brain waves of teachers and students are much stronger the more they like each other. Learning expands when a strong relational bond exists. I remember experiencing this myself the first time I gathered my confirmation students around a meal I had prepared for them. The act of creating a meal expressed more care for them than mere words ever did. Our conversations changed in that meal and beyond it.

#### SLIDE 2 – the Advocate

In our text for today Jesus introduces a presence that will remain with the disciples once he goes back to the Father. Jesus promises to give them another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will help them to remain connected to Jesus and God. (As a group they will become the presence of God when Jesus is no longer on earth.) Jesus speaks again and again on three things:

1. He is leaving. A time is soon to come when he will no longer live on the earth in physical form.
2. His followers are staying. Jesus will return to the Father but the disciples will remain on earth.
3. The Holy Spirit will be with them so that they may continue the work which Jesus has demonstrated. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of those who by faith trust in God and they can see that Christ is the source of life.

The promise of the Spirit does not come to completely faithful and courageous people. Their practice of love for one another and the world is not yet in bold fashion. They are not fully worshipping in spirit and truth. Jesus gives this promise in the midst of confusion and fear. The disciples are troubled by the announcement that Jesus will not be available in earthly form. Jesus talks about the promise of the Spirit, emerging from the mutual love of the Father and the Son for one another, and for the beloved disciples, into which they are invited, at the very moment when such grace seems most beyond their grasp.

Jesus tells them simply that in their love for him, through this Christ-like love, they are opening their hearts to the presence of God in them in the form of another Advocate, the Spirit of truth, who will guide them and embolden them for more words and deeds of love. This other Advocate, the Holy Spirit will not only guide them and give them courage, she will teach them, give aid, be a help and comfort in times of need, and she will intercede for them when their own words fail.

#### SLIDE 3 – Abide in Christ

The Spirit will be close at hand. Jesus declares that the disciples know this Spirit of truth because she abides with them, and she is in them! Jesus will go on to repeat the deep connections of the divine and human relationship. They will abide in Jesus, just as Jesus abides with the Father, and Jesus will remain with them through the Spirit. And this Spirit is not only walking alongside, but Jesus breathes the Spirit into the disciples. As it was for the disciples, so it is for us.

Jesus makes the promise of the Spirit for us, too. We will remain with Jesus, just as Jesus abides with the Father, Jesus will remain with us through the Holy Spirit. We trust that the Spirit comes down into us in baptism, and that the Spirit opens our eyes and reveals God's love for us and for the world. Jesus speaks the Spirit to the disciples in comfort and courage. To gently remind them of all that has taken place, is to settle their fears and redirect them to his promises. Christ is with us. God is present. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, guiding us, accompanying us, and we are never alone.

#### SLIDE 4- Layered Conversations – Diverse perspectives

How will we be the Spirit for one another? How will we know the Spirit is with us and speaking to us and through us? When what we say and do is connected to divine love and mercy.

We can listen and notice the Spirit:

In a holy conversation between Larry Everson and John Price which led to our work with Feed My People, partnership with Locust Lanes, and today's Ride and Stride

In our worship and prayer, times like Wednesday's prayer service, where

In our service,

In times of teaching and study,

In these times and places, we will know the Spirit is with us, spreading God's love and mercy.

