

Pentecost  
Texts: Acts 2:1-21; John 7:37-39

St. Peter's - Lafayette Hill, PA.  
May 23,  
2010

Preacher: The Rev. R. Bruce Todd

1<sup>st</sup>  
Communion/Confirmation

### “Who Needs Whom”

I need your help to get this sermon started. Would you grab a hymnal - you know - those Green Books we never use? And turn to Hymn number 559 and sing the first 2 stanzas.

*Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,  
The glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace!  
My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,  
To spread through all the earth abroad The honors of your name.*

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing My Great Redeemer's Praise! The sound of voices praising God. That's one of the ways the Holy Spirit works. Sound is a very important element in religion; Prayers, Hymns, Anthems, Preaching, Liturgy, Scripture Readings, The toll of the Church Bell. All of these sounds carry the “Voice” of God to the listening ear. Sound is the main vehicle of the Spirit of God, but you have to be listening to hear it. “...and suddenly a *Sound* came from heaven like the rush of mighty wind.” Sound was an important element in our Pentecost story from the book of Acts.

Charles Wolf was a pastor in East Texas who tells a story about a man in his congregation. This man finally admitted to himself that he was getting hard of hearing and had to be fitted with a hearing aid. Not long afterwards, the two of them were riding through a field in his battered pick-up truck. He commented to the pastor, “I use to think this was a pretty good truck because the motor was so quiet. But since I got this hearing aid, the motor isn't as quiet as it use to be.”

That's how it appears to be with a lot of churches today it's been over 2000 years since that first Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was able to speak with the disciples then, but over the years we have become a little hard of hearing. The voice of the Spirit - the Advocate - the Counselor that Christ speaks of in our Gospel lesson is all about us! But we have to be listening for it in order to hear it.

We say that the Spirit works through Sound among other things. But what exactly is sound? You must have heard the old 18<sup>th</sup> Century riddle: If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, will there be sound? Science would answer this by saying, “Yes”. The explanation being that sound is vibrations carried through molecules of air. These air molecules bumping together causes sound. The British scientist Robert Boyle proved this. He placed an alarm clock in a vacuum chamber and removed all of the air. When the alarm went off there was

no sound because there were no air molecules to carry the sound.

However, a person could also answer that riddle by saying “No - there WAS no sound.” In order for there to be a sound there has to be a hearer. There is only sound when it is received when it is heard.

That is what happened at Pentecost. There was sound only to those who heard the Spirit. There is sound traveling right through each one of you at this very moment. Sounds are traveling through your houses even when you are not at home. Air-waves - television and radio signals - cell phone frequencies - Blue Tooth IPOD signals - all of these sounds are traveling through the air. But you only hear the Sound if you’re Tuned In! That’s how it is with the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit is all around us, but it is only received by those who are tuned Into it.

H. G. Wells was a well-known Agnostic author who wrote a short story about an Archbishop in the Church of England who was faced with a difficult decision. He decided to pray about it. He prayed regularly and viewed prayer as a means of purification and blessing. But he never really ask God for anything for himself personally. But now he was at the point where he needed help desperately, so he entered his private chapel - sank to his knees, folded his hands and started to pray. He said - “Dear God . . . “ and paused. He heard a voice loud and clear answer, “Yes - what is it?” Hearing the voice of God, he was filled with fear, fainted and collapsed. Mr. Wells wrote this as a satirical story, but it carries with it a bit of truth. He prayed, but never really expected to hear God speak.

There are many people who pray and never really expect to hear from God. If we are truly open to the work of the Holy Spirit we will hear God speak, maybe not literally, but through another human being who may be sent as an answer to our prayer through their voice or actions. Or sometimes the Spirit works through that “Still small voice” that dwells within us.

Most people can accept God the Father, the being that created everything. Believing in Jesus Christ is a struggle for some but there are many written accounts of his life and work. So most people can believe in the Father and the Son. But this Holy Spirit - this Advocate - this Counselor - that’s a little harder to swallow.

I think of the story about the Sunday School Class who was learning about the Apostle’s Creed. This particular Sunday each student was to recite one phrase from the creed in order. They got through the Father section - then the Son - everything was going well until the final phrase. There was absolute silence. The students were nervously looking around. Finally one little girl spoke up and said, “Teacher, the boy who Believes in the Holy Spirit is absent.”

Without the believer, the Holy Spirit can’t be heard! That is our Job. We are the ones through whom the Holy Spirit works. This morning 7 young people are going to Confirm the

promises that were made for them at the time of their Baptism. They were a bit too young at that point to hear the Spirit calling them. But their parents responded to the voice of the Spirit by having their child Baptized.

God would still speak to us directly, but then there would be a lot of people fainting. Instead, God waits for you to call on him. But the Spirit works both ways. Sometimes the Spirit hears when you call. But there are a lot more times when the Spirit calls on you. You are the one WHO calls on the Spirit. But there are other times when you are the one WHOM the Spirit calls. Either way, the spirit is at work in you.

You are probably sitting there thinking that you don't need the Church. Maybe not, at least not all of the time. But the Church needs You! It is through you that the Holy Spirit works. You are the molecules that carry the message of God. Without the believers to receive the Spirit, the Spirit can't be heard. Today you are publicly saying that you believe in God - Father - Son - AND Holy Spirit. Today you are proof that the Holy Spirit is still active. May the Holy Spirit continue to work through all of God's people as we strive to share the life, love and joy of Jesus Christ with others. Amen