As you know, last week we’ve officially entered the season of Pentecost on our liturgical church calendar. Pentecost is God’s vision and dream for the church. The arrival of the Holy Spirit invited us into a covenant relationship with God and with one another. We have been called by the Spirit into a community. **It is a community founded upon our differences but yet held together by our common bond in God’s LOVE.**

And as our guest speaker Rev. Cheni pointed out to us last week, we are like different parts of the body, with all 206 bones altogether, bonded together with ligament and muscles, interconnected by blood vessels, arteries and veins. Pentecost challenges us to live out our individuality while in community with one another. It’s also a time when we would undertake our spiritual examination, just as we would with our annual physical exam and blood work with our doctors. Just how are our bones and ligaments holding up with one another these days? Do we have arthritis and cracking joints when we get off from our chairs? Do we need any hip or knee replacement or a cortisone shot to our joints and cartilages ? But more importantly, we must ask ourselves **are we spiritually alive today?** We might check with our physical vital signs annually such as our blood pressures, cholesterol, blood sugar, our A1C levels…etc. etc., but what about our spiritual vital signs? How’s our prayer and devotional life? Do we have an intimate and bonding relationship with our God? Do our day-to-day and behaviors and thoughts reflect the image and the character of God? These are all vital signs of our spiritual health and our measure of spiritual maturity and growth.

The book of Acts tells us that on the day of Pentecost, over 3,000 men and women were baptized. They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and fellowship, and the breaking of the bread, and in prayers not only for themselves but more importantly for others. They were able to perform signs of miracles and they shared what they have with one another while supplementing one another’s needs.[[1]](#footnote-1) These were also signs of a spiritually healthy church. The Spirit of Pentecost is still alive and well today.

The Spirit enabled the early church (and to us today) to speak with greater conviction about our faith, as we live in a moment of paradigm shift - a transition of power from the Holy Spirit to the people, anchored upon the resurrected hope of Christ. Pentecost may make us feel vulnerable and keeps us on the edge of our seats, not knowing what is to come. We’re uncertain about our future in the midst of changes that are happening all around us. We find ourselves constantly trying to play catch-up with the rest of society. Changes are happening too quickly and too soon. We don’t need to look too far as we turn our news and read what’s happening or take a walk around our neighborhood. But this grounds us in our faith in God even more, as God pledges his faithfulness and unchanging love in the midst of fears and uncertainties about our future.

In our Gospel reading this morning, we read about a young man whose life was completely transformed and touched by God’s grace. Nicodemus was on a mission in search of his own sense of purpose and identity in life. We know very little about Nicodemus except that he was a leader among the Pharisees and that he was a secret follower of Jesus. Well, that kind of make him stand out, didn’t it? Nicodemus had his share of personal identity crisis and insecurity about his own incognito faith and calling in Christ.

In spite of his insecurity, God still used Nicodemus and enabled him to express his faith, however imperfect or unpolished he might think he was. Afraid of being seen by others, Nicodemus came to visit Jesus in the middle of the night with many questions and doubts concerning his own faith and his salvation. But God clearly had a much bigger plan not only for Nicodemus but for humanity in general.

However, at first Nicodemus and Jesus didn’t really understanding each other. They were speaking in different theological wavelengths…kind of like what we experimented earlier. Some hear “Yanny” and some hear “Laurel”. Nicodemus asked Jesus a legitimate question concerning one’s own eternal life, Jesus responded in metaphorical term that one must be born again in Spirit….Seriously? How? How is that even possible, Nicodemus asked? Obviously Jesus was using symbolic, spiritual, analogical language, whereas Nicodemus was looking at the plain, literal and worldly meanings. He just wanted Jesus to tell him what he wanted to hear. Nicodemus saw birth as “of the flesh” while Jesus spoke of the re-birth “of the Spirit”. “*What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* (v.6)[[2]](#footnote-2)

But miracle did happen and transformation did take place in the life of Nicodemus. He got a sneak preview of Pentecost. He eventually discovered what Jesus meant by being “born again of water and of Spirit.” Nicodemus discovered his courage to speak out of his own voice. He exercised his sphere of influence to advocate on Jesus’ behalf in front of the Jewish council, even though his voice might be out-numbered but he was not discouraged. Despite his attempted effort of advocacy, Nicodemus discovered his true sense of being “born again” not only physically but spiritually!

Through Nicodemus, we could learn a few important things about OUR own faith journey and OUR relationship with God:

1. **Never underestimate what God can do in our lives**, even when we think we are not the right person or are not the best equipped person to be used by God. I have two words for you…WATCH OUT! Do not disqualify ourselves because God is not disqualifying us.
2. **As a sign of our faith, we must be willing to take risks.** We must be willing to take steps out of our comfort zone, as Nicodemus did. He could’ve chosen to stay silent, practicing his own private faith doing his own prayer, worshipping God in private, while staying in the shadow. Nicodemus took a step out of his safe space, simply because he trusted the leading of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Take a step back and see the larger picture.** Sometimes we just need to “pause” and appreciate what God is actively doing in our lives…and don’t take personal credit for God’s happening in our lives. We may or may not be directly involved, but nevertheless, the Spirit is still actively working in this world. Have faith and trust in the Spirit’s leading. Let Go and let God!

Isn’t this what the season of Pentecost all about…that God is able to do extraordinary things through the lives of ordinary individuals, including you and me.

On this 1st Sunday after Pentecost, also known as Trinity Sunday, may we be reminded that all of us have been called into this covenant and loving relationship among us, just as the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in relationship with one another. We bear the image of this loving Triune God throughout our lives, in our words and our deeds.

Through God’s gift of the Holy Spirit, we have been empowered to express our faith, our joy, and our love towards one another. Where has God been alongside our journey? Even when we might have wandered off and found ourselves distanced off from God, God has promised to remain with us and never to leave us. The world needs to know that the Spirit of Pentecost is still alive and burning within us.

Like Nicodemus, God has challenged us to serve as a “bridge” to reach those who may be difficult to reach. God might have already placed us strategically right where God wanted us to be, as we pray that God would open our hearts with a gift of passion and courage to seek, to love, and to embrace the work of the Spirit alongside us.

The Kingdom of God is upon us. ***God has called upon us to be born again…not physically but spiritually…from above and not from earth.*** This is the new and exciting paradigm going forward as we profess our faith in Christ, allowing our Triune God to work among us towards the fullness of eternal life, as Christ promised.

As one theologian puts it, ***“the eternal life Jesus promises is not some after-death possibility, but a present reality. Eternal life does not refer to chronological time, but rather to a certain fullness. It’s a fullness of life that we are invited into every day we wake up and live into God’s love. When we believe that God so loved the world —***

***when we believe that Jesus is the incarnation of God’s love among us — when we believe that nothing can separate us from the love of God (not even death!) — then we have eternal life here and now.”[[3]](#footnote-3)***

In closing, I would like share with you the word of the American Episcopal Bishop Michael Curry who delivered the homily during the British Royal Wedding last Saturday. Bishop Curry spoke of Christ’s LOVE to humanity as ***“redemptive, unselfish, and sacrificial. Redemptive LOVE changes lives. And it can change this world. Think and imagine a world where LOVE is the way. Imagine our homes and families when LOVE is the way. Imagine neighborhoods and communities where LOVE is the way. Imagine governments and nations where LOVE is the way. Imagine business and commerce when LOVE is the way. Imagine this tired old world when LOVE is the way.”***

**Friend, this LOVE is captured our text this morning in John 3:16…*For God so LOVED the World that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.***

**The very LOVE that God shared with us through His Son Jesus Christ, is the same LOVE that we are being called to share with one another today.** So let us, therefore, put this LOVE into action, by transcending this God’s LOVE into our community, onto our streets, and into the world **NOW**, and more than ever before.

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Acts 2:41-47* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lartey, Emmanuel Y. *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 3, P.46* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Holder, Lauren, *d365.org/devotions/living-in-the-spirit-may-23-2018/* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)