



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 104.24-35

[Worship]

24 O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. 26 There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. 27 These all look to you to give them their food in due season; 28 when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. 29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. 30 When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground. 31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works-- 32 who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke. 33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD. 35 Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD!

Consider:

[Words]

Pentecost is considered the birth of the church, the community's commission and authorization to continue the work of Jesus. It also introduced one of the most profound paradoxes of our lived faith: how to live as a church community, as we are called, and how to honor the individual manifestation of the Spirit within each person. The Spirit descended while the apostles "were all in one place together," in community. And yet it sought each person when it "parted and came to rest on each one of them" (Acts 2.1-3).

In our romans passage, Paul rejects the temptation to make spiritual authority hierarchal and insists that no one is privileged by birthright: "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father!'" (Romans 8.15). We are *all* born to this Abba who takes us in regardless of our birthright, race, gender, language, or social status. This Abba adopts us all joyfully and, with our consent, breathes the sacred Spirit upon each one of us, equally commissioning us to be agents of grace, mercy, and love in this world.

Pentecost is a tremendous gift, and as such it is also a tremendous responsibility. How susceptible we are to falling back into fear and trying to limit access to our beloved Abba through complex systems of grace and merit! When we do so, we hinder the Spirit. Like us, without God's Spirit, our churches are merely dust, devoid of life. Our Abba, however, continues faithfully to call us to re-creation through the Holy Spirit. Each one spoke a different tongue and bore a different gift to the outside world. On this Pentecost, let us celebrate our 2000-year-old community and find new ways to honor the work of the Spirit in each person.

[Scripture]

Romans 8.14-17

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ--if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Question:

Last week, we discussed how today's Church would view Paul and Silas' jail sentence as possibly just, due to their disrupting the social orthodoxy of their day. Today we would probably view the jailer as an enemy to reject, and the open cells as God's personal deliverance, due to our individuality—all in the name of sameness and narrow purity structures.

Amid our recognition of God's Spirit arriving, how do we at once maintain our communal church without monopolizing, limiting, or otherwise hindering the gifts of the Spirit as they are expressed in each member?

Also, read for yourself this week, [Acts 2.1-21](#)