More Thoughts – May 16, 2021

**“Pentecost Eve…sort of”**

Acts 1:1-11

**Background:**

In Acts, Jesus’ ascension at the end of this period does not represent a glorious ending to his life here on earth. Rather, this reprisal of the ascension inaugurates a new beginning — the beginning of Christ’s church. In verse 5, Jesus predicts the birth of the church by saying, “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Jesus promises empowerment. The power of the Holy Spirit is to come upon them and transform them from students to witnesses — with a testimony and conviction that will extend even “to the ends of the earth” (v. 8).

A remarkable learning from the story of Christ’s ascension is the speed with which Luke reports the event occurred. As soon as Jesus announces the gift of Spirit — empowerment to his disciples, before they even have a chance to respond, Jesus is “lifted up” (v. 9)

When the white-robed messengers foretell Jesus’ eventual return, the disciples apparently get the hint that they had best be about Jesus’ directive of “witnessing.”

But until the Holy Spirit arrives, the disciples are faced with an arduous task — waiting.

**Key Points:**

Waiting and praying are signatures of faithfulness.

When we are busy, we dissipate our energy on a host of tiny, inconsequential tasks**.**

**Only in sustained and watchful waiting do we build up our endurance and develop the muscles of faithfulness.**

The disciples’ waiting, of course, includes one very important activity — **praying.**

Until the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ still-fragile followers have no inkling about how they are expected to become witnesses for Christ to all the earth. It is not without reason that the most specific piece of information Jesus gives the disciples is to not leave Jerusalem (v. 4). Undoubtedly, getting out of this frightening city is high on everyone’s list.

But even in this sorry, disorganized state, the disciples could still pray. In place of a sense of desertion or loss, Jesus’ ascension gives hope to his promise to the disciples and gives hope to their prayers. The disciples do not return to Jerusalem despondent over Jesus’ departure. They are people on a mission. Thedisciples waiting in Jerusalem now know exactly what to ask for: **the baptism of the Holy Spirit.**

**Check out “Chuck Knows Church: Ascension Sunday”**

<https://youtu.be/RpgfgZlaRY4>

What if…you/we prayed to the Holy Spirit? Consider praying these words:

“**Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.” Amen.**

Hymn 393 “Spirit of the Living God”

Or pray:

**“Spirit of promise, Spirit of unity, we thank you that you are also the spirit of renewal.**

**Renew in the whole Church that passionate desire for the coming of your kingdom**

**which will unite all Christians in one mission to the world.**

**May we all grow up together into him who is our head, the Savior of the world. Amen.”**

United Methodist Book of Worship, 503