

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**  
**Acts 2:1-21**

**First Presbyterian Church of Delanco, NJ**  
**Pentecost Sun., May 31, 2009**  
**Confirmation**

### **Waiting on the Edge**

People in general seem to be tired of struggles and strains. We want to know how to live the abundant life. We want to discover the freedom and joy of being a Christian. Most Christians seem to be looking for a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit and want to experience the Spirit's transforming strength. We want to know what really happened at that first Pentecost and whether it can happen again today. There is nothing more powerful than an explanation from Scripture which is the Lord's answer to urgent questions people are really asking.

According to Rev. Lloyd Ogilvie, it seems the greatest longing in the church today is the quest for something more than basic religion. People are in need of the closeness, inspiration, and power of the Holy Spirit. Answering this is the key to church renewal and prophetic preaching and teaching. We cannot live a Christian life without the Holy Spirit living inside us. Courageous discipleship in the crisis of society cannot be accomplished without the guidance of the enabling energy of supernatural, spiritual power. The church today, like the disciples in the Upper Room, is waiting on the edge of a miracle.

Pentecost is a miracle. It is a miracle in which a personality is transformed, or a person is able to think and act beyond the limitations of his or her capabilities. The impossible happens. The miracle of a changed personality

results with spiritual gifts of intellect, emotional freedom, and a conviction that all things are possible. That is the miracle of Pentecost.

The One through whom all things are created, the eternal Word made flesh, is come to recreate humankind. Jesus clearly reveals the higher law of transformation in His life and message. He states in John 4:24, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” God IS Spirit, and we are created as spiritual beings. We are created for Spiritual union and communication. Our spirit is the point of entry for the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit enters a human being, the mind is transformed, the brain is given new information, the will is released from bondage, and the nervous system becomes the channel of supernatural or spiritual energy. That is what happens at Pentecost. Pentecost is the beginning of a new age of spiritual rebirth. What Jesus brings in His human body and His promises in words is given to His followers.

One of the greatest needs in the church today is for a contemporary Pentecost. The need in people right now matches the mood of the followers of Jesus Christ who are waiting in the Upper Room. Interpreting the condition of the waiting disciples is a vivid way of touching the raw nerves in people inside and outside the church in current times.

The message of our Resurrected and living Jesus Christ is that we are to be women and men in Christ as He dwells in us through His Holy Spirit. Until Pentecost happens, Christ’s disciples wait on the edge of a miracle, history’s greatest miracle – the transformation of human personality and the

beginning of new humanity. Our work as communicators is to join those disciples and to be ready for the miracle of a spiritual gift of power.

The dynamics of Pentecost are wind, fire, and praise. Picture the disciples expectantly waiting and praying. Suddenly, a wind begins to stir in the room, gently at first. Then it grows stronger. The followers of Jesus look up from their prayers. Now the wind is rushing with a rumble like thunder.

The Hebrew word for spirit and wind is *ruach*, a feminine word. The wind has been an emblem of the Spirit for the Hebrews through many generations. When the Lord speaks to Ezekiel in the valley of the dry bones which we read a few minutes ago, He told the prophet to “prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God’.” The dry bones symbolize the defeated, dejected people of Israel in exile in Ezekiel’s day. They need the Spirit for life to come into them again. All of us need the Spirit to re-energize us at times too.

Now in the Upper Room, the wind is blowing, rushing with irresistible force. The Lord gives outward signs of His presence in ways which can be felt so they are able to understand. What the wind is doing when it rushes, the Holy Spirit is doing in their souls and ours. It is blowing out the cobwebs of fear and the layered dust of uncertainty. The presence of the wind outwardly is an inward rushing of new thought, emotion, and will. The Lord’s people are being stirred up and brought back to life because the Lord is come!

The second dynamic is equally an outward sign of something happening inside. John the Baptist’s prophecy is being enacted. Fire and the Spirit of

God are as synonymous as wind and Spirit. The Holy Spirit burns the ridicule and mockery from our minds and hearts. This is another gift of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit rids us of anything which may cripple us in our service to the Lord. God's Spirit is given so we may continue Christ's ministry. The fire of the Holy Spirit also refines and energizes us. We do not have to stay the way we are. The Spirit has only just begun with us. We are no longer what we used to be, nor are we all which we are going to be. When the Spirit enters us, the Spirit becomes our Companion and Friend in life's challenges. The Holy Spirit loves us so much that it removes whatever may prevent us from fully becoming the persons we are meant to be.

The miracle of Pentecost is that the followers of Christ become capable of warm, inclusive love. Each in her or his uniqueness is given an unquenchable love for all God's people in the world.

The third dynamic of Pentecost is celebration and praise. The followers of Christ are filled with the Holy Spirit for praise and proclamation. The two go together. The Spirit releases us to praise and that praise becomes effective proclamation. It is the sound of the rushing wind which brings the crowds to the area of the Upper Room. It is the quality of praise which makes them want to know what is happening.

The Holy Spirit fills the room. Then the Spirit fills the waiting disciples whose preparation makes room for the Spirit. The disciples are Spirit-filled. The Holy Spirit invades every part of them and us. We are energized and infused by the all-powerful Spirit of the Lord. Praise is the undeniable evidence!

Today is Pentecost. Today we welcome anew and celebrate the presence of the Holy Spirit in our church and in our lives. We also celebrate and welcome five young people as members of our congregation by public profession of their faith. They have attended Confirmation classes, have written statements of faith found in your bulletin, and have been questioned by the Session. They, too, are filled with the Holy Spirit and are eager to be disciples of Christ and to serve our Lord and Savior. Imagine yourselves climbing into the skins of the disciples at Pentecost and allow your imaginations to capture what the disciples think, experience, and feel as the Holy Spirit fills them and becomes an important part of them. We, too, are being filled by the Holy Spirit who becomes an important part of us.

We give thanks and praise for Pentecost, for the Holy Spirit filling each of us and energizing us. We give thanks for this group of Confirmands taking an important step in their faith journeys. We look forward to their energy in support of and service in our church. May God be with us as we receive His Holy Spirit and our new Confirmands. May we all be re-energized by the miracle of Pentecost as God's Holy Spirit is unleashed to bring us sudden, unmerited, and irresistible New Life! Amen!