

Children's Moment *What is Pentecost?*

Good morning, boys and girls.

“How do you celebrate your birthday? Do you have a birthday cake with candles? Do you have a party and invite friends? Do you hand out party favors? Birthdays celebrate the day you were born and celebrate when you're another year older.

Today, we're celebrating Pentecost. Pentecost is like a birthday party for the church. Each year we celebrate it, just like you celebrate your birthday. It's a time to remember how God sent the Holy Spirit as the promised helper. We celebrate remember the way the church was born by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When you have a party, do you send out invitations? Do you invite only friends your age? When the birthday party of Pentecost happened, God's Spirit blew like a wind onto everybody there, both old and young, people of all ages. They saw little flames of fire above their heads. The Holy Spirit filled all of them.

They began talking about what had happened in many different languages, and all the people from different lands understood all that was said. The Spirit was poured out everywhere. That tells us God is with all people, no matter what language they speak. There's room for ALL people in the church. It was the birthday of church as we know it! When the church has a party, everyone is invited.

When you go to a birthday party, you either get or give a gift. What is amazing is that we **all** have been given the gift of the Spirit. We don't keep this gift to ourselves. We share this gift of the Holy Spirit with everyone we meet to show them Jesus' love. That's the favor God gives us to pass on at Pentecost.

Let's pray ...

God, thank you for the birthday of the church. Thank you that the church has room for a person like me. Fill me with the Holy Spirit! In Jesus' name, Amen”¹

¹ <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/pentecost/pentecost-sunday-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/pentecost-sunday-year-a-childrens-lessons>

Message: “Permission to Tell Others About Jesus”

No translation was needed.²

Rosemary volunteers at a soup kitchen in Santa Fe, NM where you’re as likely to hear Spanish as English. Many times she wished she could speak Spanish, especially with two of her favorite regulars, Juan and Miguel. It’s a good thing Juan’s English is fluent enough that he can translate for Miguel, who speaks none at all.

“Hey, how’s it going?” Rosemary asked one day. Juan said he and Miguel had been looking everywhere for work. “No luck,” he said. They’d run out of money and were sleeping in a nearby park. She could imagine how tough it was to find work, especially if you’re homeless.

“Why don’t we pray about it?” Rosemary suggested. She waited for Juan to translate for Miguel. Then they all held hands and asked God to help the two find jobs.

Rosemary didn’t see Juan and Miguel for a while. She figured they might have gone out of town to find work. Then one day they were back. “We want to thank you,” Juan said. Miguel smiled and spoke in Spanish as his friend translated for him: “Miguel says, ‘Prayer really works. We both have jobs!’”

“Let’s give thanks,” Rosemary urged. She bowed her head and said a short prayer of thanksgiving out loud. After saying “Amen,” she opened her eyes to find her friends staring. Miguel spoke in an urgent tone, and then Juan explained. “My friend says, and I say it too. That was a beautiful prayer. Thank you. Your Spanish is ... flawless.”

Flawless? Rosemary didn’t see how. She said the prayer in English, the only language she knew.

I love that story. It’s very appropriate today, as we celebrate both Pentecost and our 2020 graduates. The point is clear. God blesses those who serve, often in ways you least expect.

² <http://www.guidепosts.org/inspiration/mysterious-ways/mysterious-ways-a-soup-kitchen-volunteer-finds-a-way-to-communicate>

I don't know anything about Rosemary, Juan or Miguel outside of the story. We don't know anything about their family, education, work history or even much about what they did. That's okay.

We know what's most important. We know the three had faith. They believed in God. And they trusted God to answer their prayers. We know they were patient. They were open to relationships with other people, even people who weren't like them. They put their hope in Jesus, confident he would take care of them. And Jesus did.

They were blessed with a miracle. It was a small one, but the size of the miracle doesn't matter. Jesus' response does matter. Jesus answered their prayers in two ways. Juan and Miguel got jobs. They were restored to the community in a meaningful way. God did a simple thing, translating English to Spanish so they could all pray together in unity.

I believe that's a small example of what occurred on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Jesus told his disciples to stay in Jerusalem, waiting until the day when he would send them a Companion, the Holy Spirit, to give them power for their mission. They were witnesses, spreading Jesus' message. They had personal experience of his life, death, resurrection and ascension. They'd seen the miracles. They saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. They'd seen the resurrected Jesus. They had a narrative and were ready to share it. We, too, have a narrative. We've experienced Jesus in our own, unique way.

Only one thing was missing: they needed permission.

You've seen and experienced that before. I know I have. You can have all the education, experience and confidence in the world, yet still feel like you aren't ready, like something is holding you back. Something is missing. You're waiting for the moment when you know you have permission. That moment can be revealed to us in different ways. We can find it for ourselves. We can hear it from a parent or mentor. We can learn it from peers and colleagues. We can experience it through the words and actions of others. And sometimes, God opens the door for us in a special way.

Luke's narrative tells us that's what happened on Pentecost.

Early in the morning, people were going about their routines. The disciples were probably eating breakfast in the upper room. Suddenly, there was an unusual sound, the sound of a rushing wind. Tongues of flame appeared above the heads of the disciples gathered. Like Rosemary, they suddenly found themselves speaking other languages. People gathered. They heard the disciples sharing their life experience. And they understood. They believed. Luke tells us, on that day, 3,000 people became believers. Their lives changed for the better.

Let's look at some parallels between the disciples then and today, particularly our graduates. Your lives are about to change.

Being a disciple of Jesus means something. It did in Jesus' day and it does today, too. First, it's by invitation. Just like getting an acceptance letter to college or your first job, Jesus invites us into a relationship. It's a relationship filled with expectations. We agree to be students. We follow our teacher, which involves work, study, meals and play. There's a lot of hands-on learning. Anyone who's been part of a youth missions project, like the Sierra Service Project or our Scouts, gets what I'm saying.

You don't just talk. You walk. You do. You think. You care. You laugh, cry and find comfort as you become part of Jesus' group. It takes time. It takes preparation. It takes a lot of blood, sweat and tears. It's a lot like what our graduates have done over the past 3-4 years with one, big difference.

High school prepares you for college or whatever your next step is. College prepares you for your first, regular job. These stepping stones change as you navigate through jobs, your career and beyond. They define how you spend a lot of your time and energy.

Being a disciple of Jesus prepares you for LIFE. That's life in all capital letters. Life is more than school, work and fun. It's more than casual relationships. It's more than parties, travel and the experiences we have. Life isn't a thing. It isn't outside of us. Life is who we are, where we are, in whatever situation we may find ourselves, right now!

I have good news: Jesus wants to be part of your life. Not yesterday. Not tomorrow. Not sometime in the future when you have time. Not after you've gotten the wildness out of your system.

Jesus wants to be part of your life today. Right now! In this moment and the next ... and the next. Jesus wants you to become the best person you can be in each and every one of the moments of your life, the good ones and the bad ones. No guilt, no shame, just loving grace and mercy.

It's easy to feel like faith is something that's outside of us. It's an emotion, a feeling, a passion. We can put it off. But I hope, in the few years we've had together, you've discovered faith is more than that. Faith is what picks you up when you fall down. Faith is what gives you the courage to face bad news, knowing God is in control. Faith is what keeps us together, for better or worse. Faith is what gives us hope for today ... and tomorrow.

Faith is what draws us to Jesus every moment of every day.

To the class of 2020, I offer congratulations. You have done well. You will be known for your resilience. You deserve all the accolades. I hope you have a great celebration. Enjoy your time.

To their families and all households who gather to celebrate you and to remember this day of Pentecost, I offer welcome and congratulations. You, too, have reason to celebrate. May we fully support those who are in transition to the next stage in their lives.

On this day of celebration, I offer one, more invitation. It's the invitation to join in on the greatest journey of life. It's destination is heaven. The journey is life long. The sights and experiences you'll have on the way will change you forever.

I invite you to accept Jesus into your life. Put him at the center of your life and you'll be glad. Every moment of your life will be made better.

On behalf of the congregation of Corona United Methodist Church, I give you permission to share your faith experience. You're ready. Trust God. Have confidence and have faith. For you are our hope.

John 7:37-39 (CEB)

On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and shouted,

“All who are thirsty should come to me!

All who believe in me should drink!

As the scriptures said concerning me,

Rivers of living water will flow out from within him.”

Jesus said this concerning the Spirit. Those who believed in him would soon receive the Spirit, but they hadn’t experienced the Spirit yet since Jesus hadn’t yet been glorified.

Acts 2:1-21 (CEB)

When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. They were surprised and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!” They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, “What does this mean?” Others jeered at them, saying, “They’re full of new wine!”

Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, “Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! These people aren’t drunk, as you suspect; after

all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young will see visions.

Your elders will dream dreams.

Even upon my servants, men and women,

*I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.*

*I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,*

blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.

The sun will be changed into darkness,

and the moon will be changed into blood,

before the great and spectacular day of the Lord comes.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.