

# SERMON FOR MAY 19, 2013

## PENTCOST SUNDAY

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i (UCC)

7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: **Acts 2:1-21 (Focus)**

Message: ***"God Sends the Spirit to Empower Mission in the Gathered Community of TFCCCH!"***

Kekapa P.K. Lee



## **Gathering in the Word**

**Pentecost Sunday** is a remembrance for us that GOD's sending of the Holy Spirit is not once and for all—*but an ongoing gift of renewal and revitalization for Creation and the Church*. Acts 2 tells us of the birth of Christian community in the sending of the Spirit. Today marks 50 days after Easter Sunday!

**On Pentecost—GOD spoke outside the walls of temple religiosity and piety and outside the halls of political power! GOD spoke to the people in the streets; in their every day places! GOD also spoke in the vernacular (*regular language*) of the everyday and the everywhere! GOD gives the divine voice to the languages of a bunch of nobodies and a crowd of commoners—everyday peoples!**

**Our GOD is a GOD of many tongues!  
Our GOD is a GOD of many peoples!  
Our GOD doesn't not have an official language!**

GOD sends the Spirit to empower (to give power to and to make powerful) us and GOD's mission at TFCCCH!

## **Hearing the Word**

### **Acts 2:1-21 (New International Version 2011)**

*The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost*

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

<sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be

tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. <sup>5</sup> Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. <sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup> (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" <sup>12</sup> Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup> Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. <sup>15</sup> These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. <sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. <sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'



■■■■■■■■

Pentecost is the day the Holy Spirit of GOD came upon the Church in power for the very first time!

And like the breath in our lungs right now—if we didn't have the Holy Spirit—the Church would be a dead church! Of course even so, breath is part of the very nature of the Holy Spirit that the Spirit doesn't call much attention in itself—it's generally quiet in and around us all the time—except like the Day of Pentecost!

**The Spirit's job seems to be a history-long highlighting and emphasizing Jesus!**

So in order not to get in the way of anyone's ability to see Jesus as our Living Lord—the Holy Spirit seems quite content to remain about us as invisible as a puff of air! The Spirit doesn't mind one bit if you look clean through the Spirit—so long as what you are looking at through the

Spirit is the Christ of GOD! Make no mistakes however—the Holy Spirit is not the only spirit around. There are any number of spirits in life that we can breathe in, get whipped up by, and so be shaped by; but—**only the Holy Spirit brings us true life!** When GOD's Spirit comes down and fills us—we find purpose, a clarity and clearness, and a spark of life that will not and cannot come from anywhere/anyone else!

All other spirits in life lead sooner or later to disappointment, confusion, and aimlessness and lack of purpose and direction.

### **The Holy Spirit of Pentecost was poured out for so many reasons:**

- ✓ The Spirit gives us gifts and talents!
- ✓ The Spirit provides us with our life's calling in whatever vocation and work we want to take up!
- ✓ The Spirit animates and brings to life our every worship service here at TFCCCH!
- ✓ The Spirit is behind every note played on our organ, piano and the instruments and our praise team, chancel choir, and all of us singing!
- ✓ The Spirit is behind every word you've heard me preach Sunday after Sunday!
- ✓ The Spirit keeps faith alive even when our bodies are dying, allowing even gravely ill people nevertheless to testify to the hope that is within them!
- ✓ The Spirit touches us at the graveside of a loved one—allowing us to have joy and to believe and

say—despite the casket is in front of us—that we really do believe in “the resurrection of the body.”

- ✓ The Spirit pours itself out at the baptismal font or at the beach—and stays with our baptized children and adults even in those far countries where our more prodigal sons and daughters some travel and live—and when one of those wandering sheep returns to the fold and comes back home—there is never any doubting what Spirit it was that led this one back home!

The Holy Spirit of Pentecost does *all* that and more. But let's not forget the very first effect this Spirit had:

- ✓ The Spirit of GOD brought people together!
- ✓ The Spirit of GOD allowed a common understanding of the same Gospel among people who were very different from one another and spoke many languages and looked different from each other!

## **Doing the Word**

So on this PENTECOST SUNDAY, What is the Word of GOD for us today?

### **1. ONE: PENTECOST REMINDS US THAT THE MOVEMENT OF GOD WITHIN OUR LIVES AND NEIGHBORHOODS ENABLES US TO EXPERIENCE JESUS' MINISTRY AS REAL, PERSONAL AND CONTEMPORARY!**

- ✓ The Spirit's movements in and around us enables us to access higher and deeper dimensions of

reality and experience in both subtle and dramatic energies that transform both our spirit and flesh!

**2. TWO: PENTECOST REMINDS AND TELLS US THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS WITHIN US AND IS OPPOSED TO SUCH OTHER SPIRITUAL FORCES OF DIVISION AND ANIMOSITY AND THE WHIPPING UP OF FRENZY!**

- ✓ The Spirit that unmade the chaos at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 is not pleased when we try to create more chaos ourselves today—how matter how minded our motives ostensibly and seemingly are.
- ✓ Not every spirit we can breathe in, participate in, or get caught up in is the Holy Spirit but when it **IS** the Holy Spirit of our GOD then we find a life, a liveliness, and a unity and calm that really does pass all understanding! And that is more than sufficient to give GOD thanks!

**3. THREE: ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BURST FORTH IN YOU AND IN OUR CHURCH!**

- ✓ The first Christians were driven to the streets, sharing the good news, speaking in unfamiliar voices and being heard across culture and ethnicity!
- ✓ Everyone gets the message! Medes and Parthians remain Medes and Parthians—there no need to sacrifice the gifts of our cultures!

- ✓ Each culture's gifts become part of the rainbow kaleidoscope—reflecting GOD's delight in a diversity that deepens our experiences of unity and solidarity!
- ✓ Diversity is no longer an impediment and barrier to unity but precisely the vehicle and channel for the Spirit's movements in and around us in TFCCCH!
- ✓ In Pentecost—GOD speaks against our human tendency to force unity through **sameness** and **exclusivity**, to bring and understand righteousness with homogeneity (*everything same same*); and to do this all in GOD's holy name!

## **Sent in the Word**

When the Holy Spirit manifested and revealed herself at Pentecost—Jesus first followers were amazed as the multitudes who hear their message. They all had experienced Jesus' unity with GOD as the source of life—transformative power—but many of his followers may have believed to Jesus alone and could only be experience diluted and watered down in the post-resurrection world!

**GOD sends the Spirit to empower (to give power to and to make powerful) us and GOD's mission at TFCCCH!**