

Today is Pentecost Sunday.

It is also Confirmation Sunday for our church. We have eight students who are affirming their baptism.

They will affirm their intent to continue in the covenant God made with them in holy baptism.

Hopefully, by now, the baptismal promises are becoming more and more familiar. Hear the five promises:

live among God's faithful people;

hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper;

proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed;

serve all people following the example of Jesus; and

strive for justice and peace in all the earth?"

The first reading from Acts is the scripture that normally takes central stage at Pentecost. It is the story of Pentecost, so it makes perfect sense. However, this morning, I am going to rest more into the Gospel reading.

I think that in the Gospel reading, John challenges us to think deeper on how we come to the point in our life where we believe. Believing or Belief has been a constant conversation in our bible studies but it is also a topic that we have wrestled with in confirmation.

Jesus knew that we would struggle with belief.

Believe. Believe. Believe. Believe.

Four times, in three short verses, Jesus challenges his disciples to believe who he is. With that belief in our hand and in our heart, we then are able to love Jesus and keep his commandments. Keeping his commandments can be challenging, tough and maybe at times seem impossible. But, the good news is that we do not have to do this alone.

We have the Holy Spirit. That is what Pentecost is about. The Spirit. The spirit is not something that we talk about. We feel somewhat comfortable talking about God, the Father. We can somewhat grasp God in Jesus; though we wrestle with Jesus and him being God & Human and how that plays out but the Spirit, we give a shoulder shrug.

Now, just like the eight confirmation students who are affirming their faith today, I am sure many of us would love to have some Holy Spirit moments that Jesus and the disciples had; right?

Jesus had a dove appear on his head after his baptism in the Jordan.

The disciples had a tongue of fire appear above their head.

And us ... well ...

I think that we are a lot like Philip and that is why I really chose to preach from the Gospel text instead of the traditional Acts text.

Philip is sitting with Jesus and the other disciples. They have gathered around the table in the upper room on that final night. Philip wants proof. There are many of us who would love proof, right? Philip, with the others, were confused and upset and looking for answers.

Philip, on the surface, has a simple request. The request can be seen as a logical question. Show us the Father. If you do this, we will be satisfied. Philip has been on this journey with Jesus for three years, yet he still asks the question.

We, obviously, were not in the room for the conversation and the writer of the story does not give us any clue. But, I wonder if in the voice of Jesus, there was some frustration or irritation. At the very least, it seems to be a rebuke because they still do not understand. Listen to the words of Jesus:

Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not me?

For us, the good news is the following: In knowing Jesus Christ, we do know the Father. Because of his connection with the Father, we know, without a doubt, the love that God has for us.

Philip, he just could not believe.

I have had many conversations with individuals and they do not believe.

Yet, Jesus challenges us to believe that he is in the Father.

A colleague of mine, Lucy Lind Hogan, asks the following question and gives the following answer. Maybe, this will help us today:

Question: How are we able to believe?

Answer: We are able to believe through the Power of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit.

Belief is not the only thing that the Spirit helps us with. The Spirit helps us with the challenge that he gave to the disciples and to us. Are you ready? It is a two-parter:

Love God

Keep His Commandments

The disciples looked at each other, smiled and was like, no problem. That is easy enough to do. Yet, a few hours later, they let fear grab a hold of their life and they dropped the ball, big time.

As I was thinking about love and commandments. I was taken back to Jesus reminding them that all the work that he did, his relationships, the healings, and his teaching were all founded in love.

Friends, love requires action.

Stephanie Crumpton breaks it down with these two sentences:

If the disciples love him, the disciples have to take care of the people. If they love him, they should demonstrate the same care, compassion, and concern to the people of God that he first showed them.

I think Jesus gave us the spirit, the advocate, the comforter because he knew that we would wrestle with the big questions of life. He knew that we would allow fear to paralyze us. He knew that them / us would not be able to do it on their own.

For the early disciples and now for us today, Jesus says, I am leaving. You are staying. But you have work to do. To make that work easier, I am sending the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit in you, you will be able to continue the work. Isn't that great news?

With the holy Spirit working in our lives and living within us, we can know that God is not going to leave us orphaned. Jesus work is not done. The work is in us and the work in us we will continue to see the revealing of God's great and abiding love for humanity.

Over the last fifteen months, I have been trying to share insight about our liturgical life. I get it, many times, I see the eyes roll, but I believe with us being in the Lutheran church and following the RCL and the liturgical season, I need to highlight and emphasizes part of the journey.

We are about to enter into a time called Ordinary Time. During ordinary time, we will have a blend of reflection and actions. In addition, it will be a season where we will spend considerable amount of time as a congregation reflecting on Jesus love.

We, as a church, community and world really need to hear and see the love of Jesus and show that love to others. During this ordinary time, maybe we at Bay View can reflect on how we can demonstrate inclusivity, diversity, accountability, and compassion. Those four words, in my opinion, characterized Jesus love of the people.

However, this is not just for us inside these walls. The love that Jesus commands extends outside of these walls. The love that Jesus commands compels us to work within congregational life but the congregational life prepares us to demonstrate this love beyond the comfort of our own brick and mortar.

This love is a strong, deep and healing love. This love will bring us into communion with God and one another. This love will help us live out one of our baptismal promises:

live among God's faithful people

May we truly be here for one another and shower each other with the love of God.

Amen.