

“DRAW THE CIRCLE WIDE, RIPPLES OF THE SPIRIT”
“Ripples of Empowerment”

In times of fear and uncertainty, people tend to make their world smaller, to draw their circle smaller, draw lines in the sand and create rules and laws that make it clear who is in and who is out. At Easter, the disciples closed and locked the door and hid in fear until Jesus appeared, offered them peace and then sent them out to proclaim the love and grace of God. Pentecost is known as the birthday of the Church. It is when the disciples experienced the fullness of the presence of God, thought to be the gift of God’s Spirit. The power of Pentecost is the reality that God’s Spirit is not just for a select few, but for all people in all places. At Pentecost, the church itself is birthed through the power of the Holy Spirit which begins to draw the circle wider beginning first in Jerusalem, then spreading out. As Paul notes: *“In Christ there is no male or female, Jew or Greek, slave or free,” all belong in an ever expanding circle.* This experience of the Spirit is as real now as it was then. So we begin the Pentecost season with a new sermon series, “Draw the Circle Wide,” as we seek the Spirit’s presence and power in our lives. May this week be filled with God’s Spirit. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Ripples of Empowerment”**

Daily prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit, come, breathe into our hearts this day. Bless us and inspire us, that we may live Spirit-filled lives of love and compassion for all. Amen.*

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, June 10, 2019 Acts 2: 1-4

This is the beginning of the familiar Pentecost story. The Day of Pentecost was the pivotal experience for the early church. Not to undermine the Easter experience...but the Pentecost experience truly was the birthday of the church. Up to that point, individuals had an experience with Jesus, from his healing, his teaching, and his presence on earth. Those early disciples had an experience of the circle being drawn wider for them through healing, through grace and the forgiveness of sins. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift for all. *"They were all together...all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit."* The Spirit is what binds us all together, from those first believers until today. It is the Holy Spirit that gives the church the energy, the passion and the power to make a difference in the world. *Today, take some time to see where the Spirit is at work in your life.*

Tuesday, June 11, 2019 Acts 2: 1-8

Part of this passage was read yesterday. Re-reading the first four verses puts the next verses in context. The experience of God's Spirit is difficult to describe...the sound of the wind, the sight of tongues like fire. However, the evidence of God's presence was very apparent. Each disciple began to "speak in other languages as God's Spirit gave them the ability." In this passage, they describe actual languages, but if one thinks about it, believers are often called to describe their experience of God in a way that someone else can see, touch, hear and know the love of God. This allows the circle of God's love and grace to be drawn wider. *What kind of language do you use to proclaim the love of God you have experienced? Do you write it, say it, or live it? Today, write down some of the languages you use and are willing to use to proclaim the love and grace of God.*

Wednesday, June 12, 2019 Acts 2: 5-11

People that witnessed the first Pentecost were "amazed and astonished." Those first followers of Jesus spoke of the power of God as they had experienced it in Jesus and in the Spirit. God has the power to change lives, change perspectives and change the world. The gift of Pentecost is that God is still active in the world and ever widening the circle so that God's grace is open for everyone. God will speak in unknown languages in order for the outpouring of God's love and grace to be made real in the world. The out-pouring of God's Spirit at that first Pentecost was the first evidence that God's love is for everyone, not just a select few. It is grace amazing. For long-time believers, this grace and power can also be uncomfortable. The newness with which God is reaching out to the world and drawing the circle wider can be unsettling, but God is always doing new things! *How have you been astonished and amazed at God's work in your life and the world? Today ask God to speak to you in a new way so that you are able to share that love and grace with all.*

Thursday, June 13, 2019 Acts 2: 8-21

Some people always mock religious experience. Sometimes in our 21st century world, people think that this is the only time and place people have made fun of religious folk. Peter and the disciples were mocked. Some did not believe, some thought they were drunk. Peter shared from the prophet Joel that the time was coming when God would pour out the Divine Spirit on all people. This is a powerful witness, God's Spirit would be poured out on men and women, the young, the old, on those who were free and those bound by slavery. God's Spirit is not bound by our understandings. God's Spirit is for ALL people in ALL places and in ALL times. That it is important to remember Pentecost each year and celebrate this gift. *Today, thank God for the gift of the Divine Spirit. Pray that you might be surrounded by that Spirit and that our community of faith might be renewed as well.*

Friday, June 14, 2019 John 14: 8-17

Jesus was preparing his disciples for his death and his physical absence from their day to day lives. Jesus promises his followers that they will never be bereft, alone or orphaned. God's presence will be with them in a new way. That the presence of God will draw the circle wide as they will be empowered to do the same work that Jesus did. There are various definitions for that presence or spirit: Companion, Advocate, and Counselor. *What is real is that God is with us because of the gift of Pentecost. How do you experience God's spirit?*