



**Worship Series: “Do This In Remembrance . . .”**

“Remember A New Creation”

Sermon Text: Acts 2:1-21

FUMC Arlington, Texas 76011

Pentecost Sunday: 4 June 2017

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“Do no dishonor to the earth least you dishonor the spirit of man” (Henry Beston).

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Today is the day of Pentecost—the day when God sent God’s Spirit upon the infant church to bring it together and to empower the church to carry on the work that Jesus started. The phrase that I would like us to look at together today comes from our Apostle’s Creed: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, and the communion of saints.” In conjunction with Pentecost, I ask you to hear our lesson—Acts 2:1-21:

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20 The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. 21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:1-21).”

Hear again these three phrases from our Apostle’s Creed:

I believe in the Holy Spirit

The holy catholic church

the communion of saints

To say we believe in the Holy Spirit is to say that God sends the spirit to connect us to God. Jesus made this promise in the Gospel of John, “the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). What God wants people to do is live within God’s guidance and that is to what Jesus’ teaching pertains. When we say “I believe in the Holy Spirit” we affirm that God and God’s word are alive in our world today. The Holy Spirit connects us with God.

To say we believe in the holy catholic church affirms that we believe that God connects all Christians to one another through the spirit. The word “catholic” does not mean “Roman Catholic Church.” Rather, it signifies the “universal or omnipresent” church of Jesus Christ. Those who believe in the holy universal church believe that God connects believers in Jesus Christ.

To say we believe in the communion of saints affirms that we believe that God connects us with believers in the past as well as the future. A wise person said that the church is the only human institution that never loses members through death. Whether alive or dead, all believers past, present, and future God connects by faith in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus died and left the disciples, what they needed more than anything was connection. Do you remember the scene? Jesus had been crucified and Jesus made some resurrection appearances, but for the most part, the disciples and the early church must have been thoroughly discouraged and near despair. Their leader and the person for whom they had given up everything was now, and from their perspective and for all practical purposes, Jesus was now dead and gone. They must have been just about ready to give up. And then the miracle of Pentecost occurred—the events of our lesson today. Pentecost represents the church’s connection with God through the Holy Spirit. In the same way, the Apostles’ Creed also represents connection—connection between God and God’s people.

This is what our graduates need too. They, like all of us, need connection. I asked a group of our adults last week what they would say to graduates that they wished someone would have said to them when they graduated. What they said was interesting and important. I am going to boil their wisdom down into two particulars.

First, our choices have consequences. In other words, there is a connection between what we decide today and the consequences of that decision later. What may seem like a good idea today may be a bone-headed decision in hindsight. For example, when I was in seminary and my brother was at SMU, we decided to drive from Dallas, Texas, to Bakersfield, California, for the Christmas holidays. We had both finished our examinations and were looking forward to joining our family for the festivities that surrounded Christmas. In fact, my father had written us to tell

us how happy he and my mother were that we were going to be home for Christmas. It was going to be the first time in several years that all of the children would be together in one place.

The last line of his letter, however, proved to be ominously prophetic. He wrote in bold script and underlined this sentence: **Do not drive straight through from Texas to California!!!** Of course, we thought we knew better than he did about how we should best drive home. When we arrived in El Paso, we were both feeling alert and wide-awake. We kept pushing. We took several breaks and decided to go for it. Unfortunately, near Benson, Arizona, about 5:00 in the morning the driver fell asleep and we had an accident in the Arizona desert. By disregarding my father's advice—very strong advice—we were now going to pay the consequences.

My brother and I certainly did not see the harm in the innocence of our decision, but we did pay the consequences. Though neither one of us was hurt, we were delayed on our journey home by a day and had a wrecked car. Neither my brother or I wanted to face our father and what he would have to say to us—especially in the light of his letter and the explicit instruction contained in it.

Second, the advice from those who have experience is to stay connected with people. Sometimes people get so far from others that we are essentially disconnected. Psychotherapist Milton Erickson was called to the home of a woman in Wisconsin who had long been depressed. He spent thirty minutes with the woman and suggested she grow 5,000 African Violets. Then, every time her church had a celebration (birth, baptism, marriage, etc.) to send an African Violet.

Six months later, a Wisconsin newspaper carried a story about the “African Violet Lady.” In only a few minutes, Erickson had been able to help the woman to re-connect with people by using the most important things in her life . . . her church, and her love of African Violets. He heard her talk lovingly of her affiliation with the church, and he noticed the African Violets throughout her home. She regained her strength and power by re-connecting with people (Rev. Dan Flanagan, “Where Do You Receive Power” unpublished sermon, 16 May 1999, FUMC, Milford Parish, NE).

This month as graduates each one of you is leaving home in a manner of speaking. After you graduate life in the home you grew up in will never be exactly the same. It will not be your home in the same way that it has been the last eighteen or so years. You will be welcome at home to be sure, but you will never feel exactly like it is yours. You will rather establish your own home—a new home. However, don't ever let your connection get broken between you and God and you and other people. We love you and wish you God's speed in all you do.

P. S. Call home often!