

Pentecost the day that marks an end to the 50 days of Easter. Traditionally it is a day marked with celebrations as it is the birth day of the church. But we have lost the radicalness of the day. We think of this day with the peaceful dove ascending on the those gathered. But this day was loved, chaotic – it was probably more like Fat Tuesday in the French Quarter in New Orleans. Our text says that people thought Peter was drunk! But Peter kept on teaching. He in fact is picking up from where John the Baptist left off who was following in the footsteps of the prophets before. In fact, Peter quotes from the prophet Joel describing what this moment should be filled with prophecy, dreams, and visions.

How many of us are comfortable with prophecy, dreams, and visions? Those gathered that day were probably a lot like us. They were not sure about any of it. But they stayed and Peter kept talking. Today we complete our series on God in the Storms with the understanding that on the day of Pentecost, not only did the Holy Spirit descend, people came to believe and the church was born but Peter is taking the next step, proclaiming the same message as John, to repent and be baptized. And on completion of these two acts these new believers did not live just as they had before this moment. No! Beginning in verse 43 we hear that life changed dramatically for them:

<sup>43</sup>Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

If I, as the Pastor right now said, all of us who are baptized are going to live those 4 verses, I believe I would be run out of town on rails. Not just here in Fannett but anywhere. We have lost the radical understanding of what God through the prophets in the Old Testament did. They spoke about what God told them to, going wherever they were sent<sup>i</sup> but they were not always well received. It was dangerous for the prophets...

- Isaiah. Following the tradition found in the Jewish sections of the apocryphal Ascension of Isaiah, the text reports that this prophet was killed by being sawed in two under the evil King Manasseh of Judah.
- Jeremiah. Having escaped death several times previously, Jeremiah was later stoned to death by "his people" at Taphnai in Egypt and buried in honor near Pharaoh's palace, because his prayers had delivered the Egyptians from poisonous snakes and other plagues.
- Ezekiel. This great prophet is said to have died in Babylonia where "the leader of the Israelite exiles" killed him after being reprovved for worshipping of idols.
- Micah. He is reported to have been killed by Joram of Israel, the son of King Ahab, after Micah rebuked him for Ahab's impiety.
- Amos. This northern prophet was tortured severely by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, against whom Amos had prophesied.

- Zechariah son of Jehoiada. This Zechariah was the high priest's son who denounced his cousin, King Jehoash of Judah, and was immediately stoned to death in the Temple courtyard.

Lest we think this was limited to the Old Testament – Jesus himself spoke to those who were in power and authority in the religious community and found himself at odds with the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Chief Priests. It was not only Jesus who died at the hands of those he spoke out against. 14 Disciples & Apostles had ministries, either as students or as leaders after Jesus' death. The original 12 disciples

1. Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew,
2. James, the son of Zebedee,
3. John,
4. Philip,
5. Bartholomew,
6. Matthew,
7. Thomas,
8. James son of Alphaeus,
9. Simon who was called the Zealot,
10. Judas son of James, and
11. Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Matthais the replacement for Judas and Saul who converted and became Paul. Scripture tells us that:

- Judas Iscariot died by suicide as he hung himself when he learned of how his betrayal was used.
- James the son Zebedee was executed by Herod about 44 AD.

Church history and in some cases records shares the fate of the rest:

- Peter & Paul were martyred in Rome in 66 by Nero. Paul was beheaded and Peter was crucified upside down.
- Andrew went to modern day Russia as well as Asia minor, and Turkey before being crucified in Greece

- Thomas was pierced by the spears of 4 soldiers after ministry in modern day India.
- Philip went to Carthage in North Africa and then in Asia Minor, where he converted the wife of a Roman proconsul. In retaliation the proconsul had Philip arrested and cruelly put to death.
- Matthew writer of a Gospel ministered in Persia and Ethiopia. Some of the oldest reports say he was not martyred, while others say he was stabbed to death in Ethiopia.
- Bartholomew had widespread missionary travels attributed to him by tradition: to India with Thomas, back to Armenia, and also to Ethiopia and Southern Arabia. There are various accounts of how he met his death as a martyr for the gospel.
- the son of Alphaeus is one of at least three James referred to in the New Testament. There is some confusion as to which is which, but this James is reckoned to have ministered in Syria. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that he was stoned and then clubbed to death.
- Simon the Zealot so the story goes, ministered in Persia and was killed after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god.
- Matthais the apostle chosen to replace Judas. Tradition sends him to Syria with Andrew and to death by burning.

This leaves us with John, the only one of the apostles generally thought to have died a natural death from old age. He was the leader of the church in the Ephesus area and is said to have taken care of Mary the mother of Jesus in his home. During Domitian's persecution in the middle '90s, he was exiled to the island of Patmos. There he is credited with writing the last book of the New Testament--the Revelation. An early Latin tradition has him escaping unhurt after being cast into boiling oil at Rome.<sup>ii</sup>

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan and the Spirit descended upon him, he was not only claimed as God's son, the beloved, with whom he was well pleased but <sup>12</sup>the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. The Day of Pentecost like the day Jesus was baptized him launched these 11 out

into ministry, beyond where they called home to preach and teach the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Spirit propels us out. It's easier when the Spirit does that in a storm – we know what to do when its flood water, we muck out homes, we give out flood buckets, we respond to the needs before us. When it's a storm that knocks down trees we show up with chainsaws, clippers, gloves and trash-bags and get to work. But too often the storms that are around us are the ones in which we want to stay home. Today, and indeed the next several months, our challenge is to look and listen for the places in our community that are arching, hurting in need of love and care. Pentecost is a day but it is also the season in which we live until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at the heavenly banquet. May we use this time to see the places where we need to show up, in the strength of the Spirit, to give ourselves for others. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Lives\\_of\\_the\\_Prophets](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Lives_of_the_Prophets)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1-300/whatever-happened-to-the-twelve-apostles-11629558.html>