"Wildfire" Sunday, June 4th, 2017 Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-21 (CEB)

When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place.

Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.

When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered.

They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages.

- They were surprised and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them?
- How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language?
- Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!"
- They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, "What does this mean?"
- Others jeered at them, saying, "They're full of new wine!"
- Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, "Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! These people aren't drunk, as you

suspect; after all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young will see visions.

Your elders will dream dreams.

Even upon my servants, men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.

The sun will be changed into darkness, and the moon will be changed into blood, before the great and spectacular day of the Lord comes. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks, be to God.

[2ND Service: Affirmation of Faith]

[MESSAGE]

So, we find ourselves celebrating Pentecost once again; many of us are wearing red to symbolize the fire of the Holy Spirit.

There is red displayed in the sanctuary and we're doubly-blessed that we are celebrating Holy Communion today.

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place!

All of these fiery, inspiring worship images make me think that there is a pattern here that we should pay attention to—God's presence is a fire within us, a wildfire that must spread.

At our Annual Conference last week, Bishop Jimmy Nunn said that the Holy Spirit was going to grab Oklahoma by the Panhandle and shake things up. I believe the bishop is right.

What the Pentecost story tells us is that, when the Holy Spirit comes, we will be sent with a mission as the Disciples were.

- Let us pray...Come, Holy Spirit, come to us this morning and inspire us to spark a wildfire to spread the love of God. Open the Pentecost story to us with fresh insight so that we might re-kindle the fire of our personal faith. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.
- Pentecost has inspired believers for centuries with its images of fiery tongues and ecstatic preaching in many languages.
 - We often talk about this event as the birthday of the church because it marks the moment when the first disciples received the courage and the power to go out into the world and preach the Good News of Jesus, against all odds.
 - The Book of Acts continues past this story to tell us about the way the movement spread like a wildfire.
- This is certainly not the first time that we have seen images of God's Holy Spirit and the image of fire.
 - Genesis 1 describes God's creative Spirit blowing over the formless void.

- Genesis 2 narrates the life-giving breath of God.
- God's spirit appears in times of distress and darkness throughout Scripture.
- Luke's gospel tells us of John's promise of one who will baptize by the Holy Spirit.
- The Spirit of God weaves together generations of God's people.
 - We know the stories of this Spirit who brings life out of death and hope out of despair.
 - We recognize the darkness and distress in the world around us.
 - We see the widening gap between those who have much and those who have little.
 - We notice the growing divisions between nations.
 - We feel the growing intolerance of any opinion or ideal other than our own.
 - We see the effects of racial injustice, poverty, and urban violence.

- Today, we celebrate the glimpses that we have of the work of the Holy Spirit and we wait expectantly for the fresh and life-giving breath of the Spirit to fall on us again.
 - We wait for the Spirit to close the gaps and heal the divisions that threaten us.
 - We pray that the Spirit will inspire us to listen closely to the opinions and ideals of others and seek common ground.
 - We celebrate the work of the Spirit throughout history and into the future.
- So, what does this story mean for us, today?
- Listen to the prophet Isaiah:

(Isaiah 6:1-8, CEB)

- In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne, the edges of his robe filling the temple.
 - Winged creatures were stationed around him. Each had six wings: with two they veiled their faces,

with two their feet, and with two they flew about.

They shouted to each other, saying:

"Holy, holy is the Lord of heavenly forces! All the earth is filled with God's glory!"

The doorframe shook at the sound of their shouting, and the house was filled with smoke.

I said, "Mourn for me; I'm ruined! I'm a man with unclean lips, and I live among a people with unclean lips. Yet I've seen the king, the Lord of heavenly forces!"

Then one of the winged creatures flew to me, holding a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt has departed, and your sin is removed."

Then I heard the Lord's voice saying, "Whom should I send, and who will go for us?"

I said, "I'm here; send me."

That glowing coal was just the spark needed to start a wildfire within Isaiah.

I said, "I'm here; send me."

When the Holy Spirit grabs Oklahoma by the Panhandle and starts shaking, will you answer:

"Here I am, send me"?

You may be the spark that starts a wildfire to spread the love of God.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.