

May 4 08 Communion Acts 1:6-14

## RECEIVING-GOING

Shh. Don't tell anyone, but next week we are celebrating 2 wonderful days. One is Mother's Day when we honor our mother's. We give thanks for all of them. We thank them for the care they provide, the love they give, the direction they offer, the encouragement they pour upon their kids and a whole lots more. You see, we honor both those who are still with us, and those who have gone on to receive their glorious crown of glory who taught us much, loved us no matter what, and tried to instill in us the values we have. Don't forget mom this week. It doesn't have to be much, just a little note of appreciation, or just a nice card, or a bowl of cereal. After all, they are worth it.

The second thing we will be celebrating is Pentecost Sunday, the birth of the church. And with that, we will be receiving new members. And next week, wear something red as a remembrance of the outpouring of God's Spirit as we celebrate the birth of the church.

But today, we find in our Scripture reading from Acts, the preparing for that day. Many times during this week I have heard the phrase "preparing for" used. It just seemed to pop up on TV every once in awhile. Just like last week when I spoke about being prepared, today Jesus is about to ascend into heaven and he is preparing the disciples for what was to come. Though the disciples wanted to

know what was to happen after he is gone, things like when the end of the world was coming and much, much more, Jesus had a different agenda. In fact, he has something else to tell them. So Jesus, in his wisdom and grace, wants them to be prepared for the future. They need to be prepared to **receive the power of the Holy Spirit**, for they would need it in order **to be his witnesses wherever he sent them.**

So turn with me to Acts 1:6-14 as we hear God's Word for God's people this morning. **READ**

So the first thing we see is that they were going **to receive** the power of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever received a gift? Has someone said they had something for you and you waited for that gift to arrive? Have you ever ordered something that you really, really wanted and had to wait for it? What do we do? We check the mailbox daily. We check to see if the UPS person has come. Why sometimes we might even go on line to track where our package might be. We get excited about the gift or the item we purchased and can't wait to get our hands on it. I've done that with golf clubs, cooking utensils etc. Waiting is hard. Ask a kid when Christmas is near and they see the gifts under the tree. Or they have a birthday party and they see those gifts on the table. Or how about a teenager when they turn 16 and get to drive their own car. Let's hurry and eat the ice cream and cake and

get through the games and get to opening those presents.... Yes we have a hard time with this waiting thing.

Jesus told them to wait, but in that waiting be prepared to receive the gift that would transform their lives and make their lives full of joy and fulfillment.

Friends, I want to remind you that those who were in the Upper Room were people who were still afraid of what was happening in their lives. Their leader dies and rises again. If they had not seen him with their own eyes, or touched him with their own hands, or heard his voice with their own ears, they might be skeptical as Thomas was that day. But they did see, touch, and hear him and they knew he was alive. Yet, here they are on the brink of something new and they did not understand everything yet. He was about to leave them and ascend to heaven. Now what? They had come a long way, but they had a long way to go. Once before Jesus had “breathed” the Holy Spirit into them after his resurrection, but they were still the same disciples. I guess maybe they had RECEIVED the gift, but the gift was not ACTIVATED. If you glance at previous verses you see Jesus says for them to stay and not leave Jerusalem until they received the gift of the Holy Spirit which God was about to give them.

You see, the Holy Spirit was about to enter them and be activated and begin to do in them and through them such great work that would change them and the world. The Holy Spirit was about to make them into the people of God that had

power. Oh, not the power to be physically strong. But the power to do the things God would call them to do. They would have the power to transform other lives. They would have the power promised by Jesus where they would be doing greater things than they could ever imagine.

Power! It was going to come. Power! It's needed to drive a car or move a mountain of dirt. Have you watched an earth moving vehicle move dirt, or some dynamite placed in the right place take down a giant sky scraper? A few years ago one of my golfing buddies who was an engineer at CAT invited us to their showcasing of the then new earth movers. It was an experience as they climbed and moved piles of dirt. Power! Planes need it to get off the ground. They rev up those engines and the next thing you know you're airborne. Power! Tiger Woods has it when he drives golf balls. Power! Athletes need it to compete in sports. Power! Winds have had so much power these last few days that they have blown roofs off of houses, and destroyed brick buildings, and blown trains off tracks. Power! When used correctly and harnessed, it is wonderful. When used improperly it can be abused. We've seen it in politics, or sports, or even in families or in the working place.

Jesus said the power that they would be receiving was going to help them do so many wonderful things that they were going to be amazed. In fact after Pentecost, while Phillip was preaching people were so amazed because evil spirits

were driven from people, many paralytics and cripples were healed, and Luke writes of this experience, “So there was great joy in that city.”

The second thing we see is why they were going to be given this power. That power was needed because **they were going to be his witnesses wherever he sent them.** I guess they could have told their stories, but they lacked the power and the enthusiasm that would come when the power of the Holy Spirit was unleashed in their lives.

In his hymn, “We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations,” Ernest Nichol’s wrote in 1896 wrote, “We’ve a story to tell to the nations... We’ve a song to be sung... a message to give.... a Savior to show...”

Hear me church. God has a purpose for all of us on this earth. We may not know what it is yet. But he didn’t just put us here to receive things. Jeremiah writes, “*For I know the plans I have for you,*” declares the Lord, “*plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*” Part of God’s plan is to use us as his witnesses. He says go and sing the songs of joy, songs that tell the story about your faith in Jesus. Sing to others, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” Tell the stories of Jesus’ love and his grace. How he is working in your lives. Give the message of hope to those who are hurting and without hope. Show people the Savior that became your Savior and why you embraced him.

Let me close with a story of a letter I received one day while pastoring in Paris Il. There was a young man who was about 21 and came to the Trinity UMC. He joined Carole's Sunday School class and he also joined our softball team. About 2 years later he took another job that led him to another city and he was attending Willow Creek Church. He wanted me to know that he had finally accepted Jesus into his life and things were going well. He said while he was at Trinity seeds of faith were planted in his life, but that for some reason every time he decided to go forward when the invitation was given, he just remained in his seat. And now he wanted me to know that he recently had taken that big step and received Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He said, though he enjoyed and was growing in his faith in our church and through my sermons was convicted by the Holy Spirit, what really pointed him to receive Jesus was the way I behaved on the ball field while we played softball. He saw that my faith was the same whether I was in the pulpit or pitching or batting or being called out trying to stretch a single into double. I didn't lose my cool, or yell at an umpire or any of the players if things didn't go our way. You see, for him, my actions outside of church spoke louder than any of my words from the pulpit. Let me remind you that our lives are witnesses all the time.

This morning God is preparing you to be his witnesses. You've a story to tell, a song to sing, a message to give, and a Savior to show to somebody. Just like

the disciples, we need to receive in order to go. Next week come prepared with excitement and enthusiasm. Maybe even invite a friend. God might just unleash his transforming power that will shake this whole church building and shake our lives.

So come and receive this morning what God offers you in preparation of Pentecost Sunday. Come to the altar asking God to prepare your heart and bring a revival to the United Methodist Church, the Williamsville UMC and your own lives.

May the words from one of our hymns be our prayer. “Spirit of the living God, fall a fresh on me.... Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall a fresh on me.”

May you receive God’s Word for God’s people...amen!