

The May long weekend typically ushers in our Summer Season. Growing up, this was when gardens were planted (ambitious, I know, I've killed more than one tomato plant, planting too early by this rule), when flowers came out, and when greenhouses were packed. The beginning of summer BBQ's start up. Lawns are mowed, lawn furniture is taken out of storage and umbrellas are hoisted. And while the weather last week sure felt like it was the start of something, this weekend sure feels like a few steps backwards. Such is the nature of the seasonal transitions in Canada.

For me, though, it doesn't feel like summer starts until Pentecost has passed. Pentecost is a milestone in two calendars. In our week-by-week calendar, it marks the last major event. Once Pentecost has passed, the last few weeks before the church takes a holiday flow by on their own accord, Father's Day, Church picnic, all lead us into a lighter summer schedule. It also moves the Church into a liturgical season called 'ordinary' time, although it is a season that's anything but ordinary. While the Church life may be slowing down, there is nothing slow about the events following Pentecost.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit to the disciples at Pentecost marks a significant shift in the life of the church. It's a turning point. Last week, we dwelt with the disciples shortly after Jesus' ascension. They are left watching Jesus ascend to heaven, leaving them behind. I spoke last week of how Paul commended the Philippian church to be imitators of Christ. What happens this week is more than imitation; it's embodiment. It's a transformation that is completely internal, and at the same time it's completely evident to anyone watching.

When the Spirit descends and rests upon the disciples, when the Spirit empowers them, emboldens them, dwells within them, they're changed and transformed. They move from being followers of Jesus to being *followers* of Jesus. The disciples move from walking beside Jesus, relying on Jesus' physical presence to guide and sustain them, to carrying his very presence in their hearts. They are no longer followers in the old sense; they are now witnesses who embody Jesus' spirit. They are sent to live, speak and act as signs of the new life God is bringing.

In the Gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the disciples follow Jesus. They have immediate access to Jesus, they ask questions of him, and they listen and learn from him. They follow his lead; wherever he goes, they follow. They are literally following Jesus.

But now, in Acts, after Pentecost, they're transformed. They're no longer simply followers; they become bearers of the Holy Spirit's fire. Gifted and endowed by the Holy Spirit, they are carriers of the Pentecost Spirit flame, and are known not by who they imitate but, instead, who they embody.

Driven by the same Holy Spirit that led Jesus, the disciples, now renamed Apostles, respond to, witness to, and share the new life they're experiencing, embodying Jesus' teachings.

It would be easy to say that this is a story from the past, that all we do today is remember it, except I don't believe that to be true. The Pentecost story is a story that repeats itself, maybe not so dramatically, every time God's people gather. We've committed ourselves to being followers of Jesus, and not just followers but *followers* of Jesus. People who are transformed by Jesus, and we're transformed to embody Jesus' Spirit.

Like the disciples, we've been transformed from imitators of Jesus to be embodiments of Jesus's Spirit, becoming living flames of Jesus' Love, Jesus' Wisdom. Our living flames are witnesses to Jesus' Spirit of creativity, justice, service, and peacemaking. This transformation burrows deep down in our souls. It's that feeling that the disciples on the Emmaus road described as 'hearts burning.' This heart burn (not to be confused with the other one) is the living flame of Jesus alighting and burning within us. We are to be bearers of that same Spirit fire into the world.

I'm continually astonished by the wisdom that Chloe, unbeknownst to her, shares. She has recently discovered the music of VeggieTales. For those unfamiliar *VeggieTales* is a Christian CGI-animated series and multimedia franchise starring Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber, leading a variety of anthropomorphic vegetables as they retell stories from the Bible and parody pop culture while also teaching life lessons according to a biblical worldview. These short videos, along with songs, were quite popular beginning in the early 90's.

The other day, I caught Chloe singing to herself, "*This Little Light of Mine*." And while we usually associate this song with one of Jesus' parables, when I thought a little more about this song and Pentecost, I couldn't help but hear them complement each other. This little light that we shine is that same Pentecost Spirit fire which landed on these disciples. It's this same Pentecost Spirit fire which 'burned' within them, leading them all over the place. And they couldn't hide it away, they couldn't blow it out, they couldn't help but let it shine.

The little light that we shine is that Pentecost Spirit fire, except it's not so little. It's significant, it's world-changing, this not-so-little-light, this Spirit fire, is God's power moving amongst and through God's people into the world; a dark world in desperate need of this Spirit fire.

This not-so-little light that we shine illuminates injustice; it casts light upon the shadows of suffering; it highlights the seductive power of war and violence.

This not-so-little light illuminates injustice; it pierces the shadows of suffering; it reveals the seductive power of war and violence.

It exposes the lie that might makes right; it unveils the illusion that security comes from the sword; it penetrates the silence where the oppressed are forgotten. It kindles hope where it seemed buried; it dispels the fear that holds us captive; it blazes against the myth that "this is just how things are." It highlights the truth that the darkness cannot overcome the light. It illuminates the promise that the night cannot hold the dawn. This not-so-little light burns as proof that the Spirit fire cannot be quenched and cannot help but shine.

Like the disciples whose hearts burned on the road to Emmaus, and like Chloe unknowingly singing of a light she cannot hide, we are called to let the Pentecost Spirit fire blaze. This is not a quiet, private glow, but a "not-so-little light" that refuses to be extinguished—a light that exposes the lies of power, pierces the shadows of suffering, and proves that the darkness can never overcome the dawn.

As we move into these "ordinary" weeks ahead, let us remember that nothing about this season is ordinary. We are sent into a world desperate for the Pentecost Spirit fire. May our lives be the living proof that the fire cannot be quenched. Let us shine with such clarity that the world can't help but notice it. The light is not small, and God's power is moving right now, among us and through us, bringing new life to a world in need.

Amen