



## **Pentecost Sunday** is a day of power, freedom, change and imagination. Come, be taken up into “*Pentecost Prophecy.*”

Preached by Kate on June 9, 2019

I came across an article that described this day, Pentecost, as a “birthday party for a dying institution.” As you know, Pentecost has long been understood as the day the church was born. Author Katherine Hawkerself wrote that “Bottom line, this birthday party is the retrospective affair celebrating an aging grandparent, not the hopeful romp of a toddler birthday. If we dare to face this assigned holiday with the reality of the moment, it’s a good time to ask...what will be lost in the last gasps of [the] dying institution.” Well, I am going to respectfully **disagree** with Ms. Hawkerself, for I reject its premise. As I study our scripture today, I do not see the **birth** of an institution called **church**. What I **do see** is an **eruption of a Spirit-led movement** that challenges the institutions of the day. An institution is organization, structure, roles and rules. Exciting things like bylaws! If anything, Pentecost comes on like a gale-force storm that topples all the rules and rearranges all the furniture.

Conventions are being broken here. First is the complex convention of language. There is a rush of a violent wind and suddenly all the rules and barriers of language are breaking. Everyone, no matter what or how they speak, understands one another! Words are being spoken by the apostles that **all** hear as their own. Oh, how I wish this strange and wonderful wind would rush through the halls of Congress. Can you imagine the wonderful confusion that would occur if without warning every single elected official started to hear and understand each other? It would be the end of government as we know it.

Another unexpected turn – Daughters and sons, slaves, the underclass, young and old, will prophesy! **All people have a voice on this day!** Not just the rich and famous. Okay, imagine with me, for Pentecost is surely a day for untamed imagination, that you turn on your TV and a young black woman from south Chicago is speaking about her neighborhood and, without

an interviewer to soften her narrative, she tells you **exactly** what needs to be done. You change over to Public and a gay man from Tanzania is speaking about living in a country where engaging in a homosexual act will get a minimum 30 years in prison. On CBS, a trafficked and terrified teenager is pleading for freedom. The **dying ocean itself** is sending out an urgent SOS on Fox News, which has been renamed the Earth Channel. Finally, you find that all the shopping networks have become totally devoted to engaging consumers to find and enact solutions for all these problems! Urgent stories are filling the air-waves, **not** the latest meaningless tweet or atrocious antics of the rich, ludicrous, and famous. In the storm of Pentecost, instead of being dumbed down by our technology, it is connecting us to one another and awakening an action.

Another broken convention is found in John’s gospel. Jesus tells his followers that God will give them an Advocate, a Counselor, to be with them forever and this advocate is the **Spirit of Truth**. Pentecost is a day for the Spirit of Truth. We live in an age that seems to have given up on truth, both telling our own and discovering the universal. There are many people who deny that truth **exists at all**. And while I understand the post-modern sensibility that each of us sees the world through the lens of our background, our upbringing, our social and geographical location, including sex, race, religion, and economic status, I also believe in something larger. I believe there is a **divine lens**, which we can access in deep meditation, prayer, and the careful study of scripture, which widens our view and informs our understanding. We never lose our personal lens, but we can keep it in perspective as we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, and all the worlds that she weaves together. This Advocate that Jesus speaks of, we need her today more than ever.

On this Pentecost Sunday, let us invoke this Spirit and prophesy! My dear people, on this day, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019, we can **stop grieving a**

**dying institution!** An institution was not born on the day of Pentecost. No one was writing bylaws and electing committees, boards, and chairs. No one was planning a sanctuary with evenly lined up pews for an “**order** of service.” **No.** On this day, a Spirit-filled movement blew into town rattling the buildings, the people, the social and political hierarchy. Conventional communication was blown apart, transcending culture and difference, and uneasing the people. They tried to dismiss it – “these people are all drunk” – but they could not put a lid on it because this Spirit was of truth and did not come from a bottle. **It was then, and is now, of God.**

This Spirit-led movement is **not dying but rising as we speak!** The **young** seem to have an open ear frequency for it that sinks right down into the heart. When the Spirit takes over the heart, watch out! Twelve year old Anne Frank, hiding from the Nazis in the 40’s, was speaking from the Spirit when she wrote: “How wonderful it is that nobody needs to wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” She passed that spirit to Malala Yousafzai, the teenager who was nearly killed by the Taliban some years ago, when she continued to insist that “One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.” A few years later, the Spirit burned and raged through David Hogg, Emma Gonzalez, and other Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School students. They refused to be pacified by offers of “thoughts and prayers” from government officials after a horrific shooting, spoke truth to power, and demanded serious gun control. Echoing Ghandi, Gonzalez said “it’s time for the victims to be the change we need to see.” Nancy Rice’s granddaughter Zoe knows this spirit in her friend, Kendrick Castillo, who lunged for a gunman in Colorado saving who knows how many lives. His courage changed the world.

High School students organized “**Fridays for the Future**” in Seattle, Washington, after a Seattle Youth Climate Strike in which hundreds of students left school to rally in the city’s Cal Anderson Park. They were inspired by Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, whose climate activism in front of a government building in Stockholm went viral. A Seattle youth, Joe Mangan, who pledges to

rally Seattle youth **every** Friday told the crowd “The UN says we have twelve years to preserve our earth for my generation and future generations,” and demanded the government in his city live up to its ideals and reduce carbon emissions.

Are these children **misbehaving**, or are they infected with a **Spirit of truth**, that is rattling the buildings, the people, the social and political hierarchies? And what about church hierarchies? Can you imagine what happened in the First United Methodist Church in Omaha when the congregation gathered to confirm eight middle schoolers and these children stood up as a group and said **no!** Instead they read a letter: “Most of us started the confirmation year assuming that we would join the church at the end. But with the action of the General Conference [which had a few months before affirmed the denomination’s rules against ordination of gay clergy and performing same-sex weddings], we are disappointed about the direction the...denomination is heading. We are concerned that if we join at this time, we will be sending a message that we approve of this decision. We want to be **clear** that ... we believe that policies on LGBTQ+ clergy and same-sex marriage are **immoral.**”

There it is! There is a right and wrong. And the youth know it. Our Sunday School kids know it as they plant pollinator gardens as they cannot stand the loss of the bees and the butterflies. The Spirit of truth, the fuel of Pentecost, is catching fire in their hearts! So, **let us** open that special ear frequency to the Spirit of Pentecost today, let it descend into **our hearts.** Let us follow the young and **stop** propping up institutions of all kinds that have somehow become blind and deaf to what is really happening in our world. I do not speak hyperbole when I say that the future of this beautiful earth and every creature on

it is at stake.

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“When the day of Pentecost  
d come, they were all  
gether in one place. And  
ddenly from heaven there  
me a sound like the rush of  
violent wind, and it filled

the entire house where they  
were sitting. Divided  
tongues, as of fire, appeared  
among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.  
All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...” This  
is the day. Now is the time. **Receive the Holy  
Spirit.** Amen.