



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for May 23, 2021**  
**“Emerging: Love Poured Out”**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb**  
**Scripture: Romans 5:1-5**

## **Pentecost**

We celebrate Pentecost today. The Holy Spirit was given to God’s people at Pentecost following Christ’s ascension. Christ had instructed them to wait for power from on high.

*“Do not leave Jerusalem,” he told them, “but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:4-5)*

That day arrived and those who waited were not disappointed. The Spirit came with *“the rush of a mighty wind.”* *“Tongues of fire”* rested on every individual. The church was birthed that day.

Christ called it. *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*

And so they were, and so are we as we too are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

## **Images of the Spirit**

There are any number of images associated with God’s Spirit. At the top of the list is *“mighty wind.”* A mighty wind rushed through the place where the believers were worshipping that first Pentecost. Its power was unmistakable.

Not far behind is the image of *“tongues of fire.”* That fire rested on every individual. I am always heartened by that. The Spirit blesses not just the whole, but every individual—you and me, included.

The dove is also an image of the Spirit. The Spirit descends upon us peacefully and with grace.

I like the story told of the pastor who on Pentecost Sunday had a dove ready to be released in the sanctuary upon his cue. One of the church custodians was stationed in the balcony along with the dove ready to set the dove free on the unsuspecting congregation.

At the end of the pastor’s sermon, the cue was given, but no dove. Three times the cue was given, still no dove. It was then that the janitor yelled out, *“The cat got the Holy Spirit, do you want me to throw the cat down?”*

There is no cat today. There is no dove. The Holy Spirit though is with us all the more.

God’s love is poured out through the Holy Spirit and we cannot help but be transformed. Let’s read about that as we turn to God’s word.

## Romans 5:1-5

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

### The Power to Persevere

Believe it or not, today marks the one-year anniversary of us getting back together in-person after the initial outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic. It has been quite a year. We have been through a lot. There have been a lot of twists and turns. It has not all been perfect, but it has brought us to this point.

We are emerging, and we can resoundingly affirm that God has been with us all along. And if God has been with us all along, he will continue to be with us. Whether or not we realize it, we have been granted the power to persevere. Paul talks about such things in our passage for today.

*"Not only so, but we glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Romans 5:3)*

Our hope is in God and his sufficiency for our lives, a sufficiency tied to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

### Justified Through Faith

Romans 5 opens with a clear statement about God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ. Romans, as much as anything, offers a clear word about salvation.

*"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2)*

We are made right with God through faith and because of that we have peace with God. Our sin no longer separates us from God. We are forgiven, all because of what Jesus did on the cross.

Tomorrow is a very special day for Methodists. It is the anniversary of the day when our founder, John Wesley gave his report of the night he felt his heart "*strangely warmed.*"

Wesley writes in his Journal on May 24, 1738 that he went one night rather begrudgingly to a meeting on Aldersgate Street. It was about a quarter before nine, and while a man was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ,

*"I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."*

The Spirit moved in Wesley that night. "*I felt my heart strangely warmed,*" he said, "*I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation.*"

## Love Poured Out

Romans 5 offers a clear word not only about God's good work to save us, but sustain us. All along, what Paul writes about is God's love—God's love made evident in Christ **and** the Holy Spirit.

Let's admit it, we need that love. We are desperate for it, and God is ready to oblige. God's love is constantly making its way into our lives. I hope you have experienced God's love over the past few months. God has seen you through and will continue to do so. God loves you that much.

From that another image of the Holy Spirit emerges. In speaking about how God sees us through Paul writes, *"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."* (Romans 5:5)

I am struck by the image of God's love being *"poured out"* into our hearts.

There are droughts all over the world, leaving a dry and parched land, and millions of people in jeopardy. The drought in the Southwestern United States is quite severe. I understand it has the potential to develop into the worst drought in 1200 years. There are also droughts throughout Africa.

Water poured out on a dry and arid land is the only thing that will bring relief.

When it comes to our lives it is all too easy to get parched when it comes to our spiritual lives. Considering all we have faced over the past year or so, it has been awfully easy to slip into a dry spell when it comes to our relationship with God.

God stands ready though to offer refreshment to our weary souls. God provides just what we need to be refreshed in every way. God's love offers refreshment, the very thing needed to satisfy a parched and weary soul.

God's love offers:

- Supernatural power to endure.
- Meaning and purpose for life.
- Offers hope, even in our darkest hour.

Rather than being overcome, we become overcomers.

*"God's love is being poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."*

It comes to us to receive what God longs to offer. It comes to us to open our hearts and let God do his thing.

### **God's Supply Never Runs Out**

God's Spirit is always with us. Jesus talks about the Spirit as a Counselor and a Comforter. Essentially, the Holy Spirit *"walks alongside"* us helping us face whatever challenges befall us.

It was that way for the disciples. It was that way for those who were a part of the Early New Testament Church. It is that way for us as we emerge from this pandemic or anything else we might be facing.

God's supply never runs out.

The story is told of Saint Augustine who one day was walking along the seashore when he came across a child scooping water out of the ocean with a pail and pouring it onto the sand.

Augustine asked the child what he was doing, and the child explained he was *“emptying the sea out into the sand.”*

God’s supply never runs out.

*“God’s love is being poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.”*

God’s love through the Holy Spirit is available still today. The Spirit is still moving. God longs to fill us to the overflowing, particularly when we are spiritually dry. Let this then be our prayer:

*“Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations.”*

### **The Wild Goose**

We spoke a bit ago about the dove being one of the images of the Holy Spirit. How about another image? While the Roman Church envisioned the Holy Spirit as that of a peaceful, graceful dove, the Celtic Church considered the Holy Spirit more like that of a wild goose. The image of a wild goose descending upon us is nothing like the peaceful image of a dove. A wild goose is a noisy, bothersome bird.

I encountered one the other night in the parking lot at Skyline Chili over on Hurstbourne. He was not about to back down. He was all about letting me know he was there. He had no qualms chasing me.

I like the image of the Holy Spirit as a wild goose. It jars us out of our complacency. It moves us from the overly safe image we have of the Spirit. It very well may be then that we need to consider here on Pentecost Sunday going on a wild goose chase, not where we chase the goose, but the goose chases us, and once and for all convinces us of God’s love *“poured out.”*

Let us pray:

*Great Spirit, Wild Goose of the Almighty.*

*Be my eye in dark places.*

*Be my flight in trapped places.*

*Be my host in wild places.*

*Be my brood in barren places.*

*Be my formation in the lost places.*