

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



June 5, 2022

WORKS

it's what we do

by Drew Downs

The idea of being known by our works feels like a big deal. A major responsibility.

People are watching. Observing. Following along. *Am I doing it right? Am I setting a good example? Will they catch me when I'm not paying attention and do something I didn't mean to?*

A former bishop of mine bought front "clergy" plates for all the clergy of the

diocese. Of course, none of us wanted them. It would mean even our driving would be scrutinized. And we were afraid of all of the unintentional messages we'd send.

I suspect, however, that the more we focus on evaluating the behaviors of one another, the less we actually see the work of the Spirit. Because I'm not the spirit. But I know the Spirit can do her work through me. If I'm willing to let her.

EASTER

Spring 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

This week we celebrate the second biggest feast of the church year. A feast so important it gets *two names*! The church calls it Day of Pentecost: Whitsunday. We know it simply as Pentecost.

Obviously, number one is Easter. But from very early on, Pentecost took on a sort of *companion* relationship to Easter. They even patterned the liturgy for the day to match the vigil, offering it as a secondary baptism day, and making the whole thing *feel* like a second Easter.

While the biblical stories we read for Easter and Pentecost are very different, what connects the two thematically is God's in-breaking. Certainly there are other stories of God doing remarkable things. And arguably, more spectacular things. But in these two events, we have God changing the order of creation itself to widen the circle.

In Jesus we have the vehicle of connection with God. And in his resurrection, we have the opportunity to *continue* that connection, even in death. But in Pentecost, we get the keys to the vehicle. We've had our driver's ed. The license is issued. Now it's up to us to turn the ignition and make it go.

And just like driving around town, there are people who think they aren't ready. There are people who are *way* too confident in their ability. And there are people who really ought to let someone else drive them. But the point isn't our skill at driving. The work is connecting with God and one another. Just doing it.

With love,
Drew

EASTER

Spring 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Day of Pentecost: Whitsunday

June 5, 2022

Collect

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From John 14:8-17 (25-27)

"Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do"

Reflection

Each Sunday toward the beginning of the service of Holy Eucharist (or toward the end of Morning Prayer) we pray The Collect of the Day. A collect is a kind of prayer. And this week we get a choice between two collects. And it is kind of fitting.

The first one, which I've included above is a prayer about the world and the Holy Spirit's agency in it.

The second option is to speak of the Spirit coming to the disciples to empower them.

As a priest and leader of worship, I often lean toward the latter option. It fits with the sense we have of this day and of the distinctness of our calling. But this year, I felt a

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different nudge. Not to focus on the specialness of following Jesus or the particular power we are granted to be the children of God. But to the work itself.

There's something about the idea of being empowered by the Spirit that really resonates with me. Especially as so much in life makes me feel so disempowered.

But we also receive so many messages from our culture that suggest we *hold on* to our power, that we are somehow threatened to *lose it*. And therefore we must protect it.

Nothing could be further from the gospel than this.

Our specialness is found in the Kin-dom of God, not in the kingdom of Earth, in the United States of America and the great state of Indiana. We aren't made special in the eyes of the (state) law. But in the eyes of God.

The profoundness of the Pentecost event is not that disciples could suddenly speak in many tongues, but in that every person present could *understand*. The Spirit didn't come to make the followers special, but to make the grace of God known by all.

It is our *privilege* to share this message. To be the way others may receive grace in the form of love, peace, and hope.

This is our work. And it is, indeed, work.

It is also the work through which God will be made known.

Our doing the work of Jesus is how people encounter Jesus. Which is our honor. And their opportunity.

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