

If you're friends with me on Facebook, you know that this past week I had one of the most quintessentially amazing sports fanatic moments. My Tigers were in Seattle this week, which meant that games started at 10:10, and despite my intense night owl status there is just no feasible way for me to stay up for the whole game on work nights. So, there on sat at 11:50 on Tuesday night staring at the kind of box score every baseball fan loves to see: zeros. Zeros across the board. One of our young guys, who had had a catastrophically bad season last season, lost 17 games kind of bad, and who had battled Covid during Spring Training had a no hitter going. So there I sat with a quandary...do I stay up? Do I go to bed?

Well, I went to bed, because, adulthood...plus, our broadcasters had jinxed it anyway by *talking about it*, which you *don't do!* And in my cynical sports brain, I didn't think it was going to happen. The Tigers are just...not good this season and so the idea that they could pull this off seemed unfathomable. Then low and behold, I woke up Wednesday morning to my Facebook feed declaring that the awesome had happened. Spencer Turnbull had been unhittable. What made the night even more incredible was he told the announcers in his post game interview that the reality was when he was doing his warm-ups for the game, he just didn't have it. His mechanics were all off and he just wasn't feeling it. And then, during the interview, he kind

of paused, and he was like, ya know I just have one more thing to say, I have to say glory to God, because I thought it was going to be a rough night, and then I made myself take a deep breath, I prayed, and just ran out there, figuring I would see what happened. And what happened was...all those mechanics fell into place and he pitched the game of a lifetime.

I listened to that interview and I was like, man, that right there is a Holy Spirit moment. This kid was standing in the bullpen thinking, I so do not have this tonight, and rather than stressing out and panicking, he prayed. He prayed and was just like let's see what happens. And I know...the Holy Spirit has *way more important* things to do than impact baseball games but for him, the Holy Spirit was in that moment. It was the Holy Spirit that gave him that oomph that said, alright, deep breath, let's go do this, you got this, kid, go out there and throw some fire. It would have been so easy for him to stay stuck in that moment, in that crummy headspace of I don't got this tonight. He could have run out to the mound in fear of what was to come, but instead, he just went out there and did what he could do, and what he could do was pretty dang incredible.

Across the spectrum of our lessons this morning, we find the Holy Spirit moving and grooving in very similar situations to that bullpen on Tuesday night in Seattle. We're faced with multiple groups who just simply

don't know what comes next, what they should do, or if they are even *capable* of doing anything, and the Holy Spirit just kind of swoops in and says, ok, go get it. Into moments of extreme fear, confusion, and uncertainty, the Holy Spirit blows with a power to simultaneously calm and unsettle our hearts for the road ahead and helps us to carve our way forward, trusting that we got this, even if that's just on a wing and a prayer.

Let's start with the disciples. Here we are still in the Upper Room in those hours before Jesus' arrest. Here we are still with rambly Jesus, *but* Jesus tells them that for as many words as he has spoken, there are simply still things that they are not ready to hear, not ready to comprehend. He tells them that in order to get to that place, for their hearts to be ready, he has to go away. It's jarring to hear, but he tells the disciples that they *need* him to go away, because if he stays, then the Holy Spirit never comes, and if he stays they're never going to do this on their own. If he stays, they're always going to be looking to him for answers and not figuring out where God is calling *them*, *how* God is calling them to serve. If he stays, it's like they're going to perpetually have training wheels on their faith and ministry, and the time has come for them to peddle on their own.

It's a terrifying prospect and you can imagine that if the disciples had thought bubbles over their heads they would sound a lot like my Tigers

pitcher. We don't got this. This doesn't feel right. We're going to be off-kilter for the foreseeable future. And yet, Jesus does for them, what Spencer did for himself, he reminds them that they've got this, they've got this because the Holy Spirit is going to be with them, is going to guide them, and is going to help them figure it out. The Holy Spirit is going to be the thing which helps them hurdle the biggest obstacle to their calling: fear. The Holy Spirit is going to take the training wheels off and give them a push forward, but stay behind them, arms outstretched the whole way in case they fall, but they have to try, they have to do this on their own, because at the end of the day that's why Jesus called them. He didn't call them to just be yes men who followed along behind him mindlessly. He called them because he knew they could be the future when he was gone, and now it's time.

Fast forward a little over fifty days from that moment and we find the disciples and 120 other believers on the cusp of another moment of fear and change. They have been given the assurance of Jesus' resurrection and watched him ascend into heaven to be with God, and so now they know...it really is up to them now. Jesus is well and sufficiently gone. It's their time. And you have to imagine that they all gathered inside this house with whispers and wondering of what comes next. What are they supposed to do now? Who will guide them? Where will they go? What will they say? It's

not like Roman oppression has entirely disappeared so what they want to do and who they are called to be is still insanely dangerous, and what if no one believes them. What if this is all a waste? The same vibe of the Upper Room, fear, confusion, and uncertainty, has to be rampant in this house. But this time, rather than just *hearing* about the Holy Spirit, they *experience* her in a whole new way. Wind whips through the house, tongues of fire appear, and suddenly in the midst of a cacophony of sound, they all understand each other clearly.

Peter takes a risk and stands up and tells them...the words of Joel have been fulfilled. The promises of Jesus have come to fruition. The Holy Spirit has been unleashed in their hearts and in the world, and now the gospel is in the hands of every single person regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social status. The kingdom of God is well and sufficiently in their hands, the training wheels have been obliterated, they've gotta do this on their own, while trusting that the wind will always be at their backs, the Holy Spirit guiding them ever forward, there to catch them if they fall.

It is so very easy in this world to fall into the mentality of these rooms, especially when it comes to the calling of our faith. Wracked with fear, confusion, and uncertainty, we would much rather that Jesus left the training wheels on and took care of it himself. Because honestly? That's

way easier. It's way easier to just say, I'm a follower of Jesus than to actually be the church, be the kingdom in this world. Because on the one hand, that calling is scary and calls us out of our comfort zones and calls us to speak words that are in direct contrast to everything this world stands for. And who wants to go out on that limb? So often not us. And on the other hand, sometimes we would rather just follow blindly behind Jesus and say, you take care of this Jesus, you got this, you don't need us, you can handle it. Sometimes we so desperately want to keep the training wheels on, because they're safe, they're easy, and they require very little effort.

But y'all, we aren't training wheels people. We are Pentecost people. This is the ushering in of *our time*. At some point, it has to be up to us. At some point, we have to look around and say, this world we have created is not emblematic of the kingdom God called us to bring, and we need to do something about it. At some point, we have to say, ya know what, maybe I'm not quite feeling it, maybe I don't quite have it all together, but I have to go do something, my faith compels me to go do something and see what happens. At some point, we have to take the leap, figure out faith for ourselves, and trust that the Holy Spirit is going to be there to push us, hold us, guide us, and blow away our fear.

I would almost guarantee you that the disciples, those first believers, the early church, they probably had days, more than a few days, where they didn't want anything to do with their calling. Where they just wanted to say, nope, not today. It's too hard and people don't listen anyway, and somehow they'll figure it out on their own, so why do they need me to show them God's love? And yet...the Holy Spirit kept nudging. It is hard, but it's worth it. Some may not listen, but someone needs to hear exactly what you have to say. Some can't figure it out on their own. They need you to show them God's love because that's who you are. The same goes for us...sure, what we do, and who we're called to be is hard, it's exhausting, and some days we don't want to do it. But the love of God is *worth it*, the kingdom of God is *worth it*, and if we don't share it then who will? We have to let the Spirit it, let it help us jump the hurdles of our fear, and push us out into the world. My pitcher Tuesday night couldn't shrug his shoulders and say, nah, don't get it, I'm staying in here tonight, I'm not pitching. He had to go do it and he did, with the Holy Spirit by his side. We can't stay put. We've gotta move. We have to give ourselves as the church the chance to run out there and do the miraculous. We have to let her help us rise above our fear. We have to take a deep breath and trust that we've got this. We have to trust that the Holy Spirit might help us be unhittable. **AMEN!!!**