

There had to have been at least one. *At least.* In a sea of thousands of people, it is more than likely that there was more than one, one person who wondered what on earth they were doing there. But...it's Pentecost...it's a high holy day. It's fifty days after Passover and this is *just what you do.* You go to Jerusalem, you go to the Temple, you go and worship amongst your community of people, even if you aren't sure they're your people truly, and you run through the motions. Each of us have probably had that Christmas or Easter where we just take a deep breath and go...well...I'm not feeling it, but this is what we do, so I'll go, and you don't expect anything to hit too hard, but you can't imagine there is another option other than being in worship on this day of all days.

And if there is the person who is just mumbling their way through it, not really convinced this is their place anymore, there is a person who doesn't think they deserve to be there, who shuffles off to the fringes of the crowd and quietly says their prayers, hoping no one notices them because who are they to deserve to be in a place of worship right now. There is someone weighed down by the weight of their sins and maybe their own personhood, who is there because they desperately *want* to be, but is certain that they shouldn't be, because how can they be worthy to worship God when they're such a sinful, broken mess?

And next to them is the person that flat out doesn't want to be there. Who is there because their parents dragged them there, but who is like, why do I need to go because I don't believe this anymore? Who has poked as many holes as possible into their faith and is like, yup, it's not alive anymore. God and I are on the outs. I don't need to go. There is someone distinctly *not* saying the words of the prayers, who is making up stories in their head rather than listen to anything being said, because there is no reason for them to be here.

And next to them is the person who beyond a shadow of a doubt knows that this is where they need to be, because they need this moment with God. Maybe they're in the midst of a faith high or they're grieving and don't know where else to turn but here. There are those people who know that this is where they want to be because they believe it, they trust it with every fiber of their being and they have nothing else they can do but worship. And there is the person who knows this is where they need to be because, well, surely if anyone *deserves* to be here, they do because they have done everything right, followed all of the rules and checked all of the boxes. And there is most certainly the person sitting there, looking around, and wondering what are all of these *other* people doing here? Whose eye can't help but roam in judgment because they've heard the rumors about that

family and they know where that guy was the other night and they aren't even from around here and well, that group, if there is anyone that would be drunk at 9 am...

And amongst this ragtag group of worshippers are the disciples, wondering *how on earth* they got **here**. No one is going to listen to them if they use this as an opportunity to talk about Jesus, people are going to think they're nuts. How are they going to explain that he has *ascended*, gone up into heaven, but is most definitely resurrected? Which one of them is going to speak if the opportunity presents itself? How are they going to ride this line between tradition and what people expect from Pentecost and what they know now about Jesus, God, and how the world has entirely flip turned upside down all because of one crucifixion out of hundreds?

Fast forward 2,000 some years later and I'm guessing that our gathering isn't that much different. The names, the places have changed, but the feelings, the emotions probably haven't. There are those of us that are here because this is just what you do, you get up on Sunday morning, you go to church, you say the right things, and you go to lunch. Some of us might feel like we shouldn't be here, because we're undeserving of such unmerited grace and we know what the last week of our lives have looked like, the harsh words spoken, the mistakes made. Some of us straight up might not

want to be here, you got other places to be, things to do, and frankly you aren't sure what you believe anymore.

And there are those of us who know we need this moment, need it because we're going through something, need it because our faith is just *alive* today, need it because our faith is what continues to get us through. And for sure, there are always going to be those side eyes right? Even amongst the most loving of places, the questions of who should be here and who shouldn't, the troublesome little inner monologues that none of us are immune to when we are gathered in a community of people, even if that community is filled with people we love dearly. And like the disciples we might be feeling it, knowing this is where we need to be, but Lord help us if we're the ones that have to talk about it, explain it, help people connect on a deeper level. Who are we to take up this mantle of leadership and preaching the gospel? Where do we even start?

Into this whole mishmash of emotions comes the rush of wind that takes the whole world by storm. Jesus had promised the disciples an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, but Jesus never said anything about the divine whirlwind coming through and whipping up a frenzy of chaos, and yet that's exactly how the Holy Spirit rolls. There is wind and fire and suddenly everyone is babbling and everyone is somehow...understood. But even that

isn't the most important part of the story here...don't get me wrong the understanding in your own language is vital, but the key here is that it happened to *everyone*. This wasn't a pick and choose where the wind blew, this wasn't a look around and see who did and who didn't get a tongue of fire above their heads, this is a collective Holy Spirit moment, in about as literal of a sense as you can get.

For the person who was going through the motions, for the person completely unsure of what they were doing there, for the person who didn't think they deserved to be there, hiding on the margins, for the person who knew they needed to be there, for the person wondering why other people were there, for the person whose faith was full to brimming, the Holy Spirit came. The Holy Spirit came and blew a whole world of understanding and hope into their midst and there was no discrimination over who got what treatment. *Everyone*, each person got this gift. A wild, radical gift of grace that said God is knowable *for you*. God is present *for you*. The Holy Spirit is a gift *for you*.

And the same thing happens here this morning. That same Spirit, that same power, that same unshakeable force that is the love and grace of God echoes through this place, no matter where you find yourself on the faith road this morning. In a valley, on a hill, on the shoulder, not even remotely

near the road at all, the Holy Spirit descends for you and to you. All week, I have had a lyric in my head from my favorite song in the musical *Hamilton*. Admittedly, I always feel weird that my favorite song is an Aaron Burr song, but oh well. He boldly sings out that “love doesn’t discriminate between the sinners and the saints.” And man, if that isn’t what Pentecost is. The Holy Spirit doesn’t discriminate in who gets this gift, who gets to hear the precious word of God in a language they know and understand. The Holy Spirit isn’t saying, yes you, but no not you. The Holy Spirit is saying, whomever you are, wherever you find yourself, I am here, I am yours. May that be a gift of grace for you this morning. May that be the gift of grace for you each morning, because where you find yourself today might not be where you are tomorrow or in a week or in a year, and yet, the Holy Spirit isn’t going anywhere, but will remain and remain and remain, beckoning you forward, reminding you that you are loved, and that there is nothing which you can do to chase it away.

The gift is yours this morning, and if you need that to just settle on your heart, let that be enough. Let that be enough to help you breathe a little bit easier, to be a little more patient with yourself. The gift is yours this morning, and if you need a reminder, an oomph that the work of the gospel is yours and that you are more than capable, more than qualified to do it,

then let the Holy Spirit do that, because that's what she's saying. *You* have this gift, *you* have the ability to let God's love be known. The gift is yours this morning, and if you need it to remind you that you are loved and worthy, then hear that robustly and clearly, you are loved and worthy of this gift, no questions asked, full stop. The gift is yours this morning, and if you needed to hear that the world needs your work, your hands, your feet, if you needed the reminder that the work of the gospel is worth it, well, phew, that is the heart of the Holy Spirit. That is what stirs our hearts and moves our feet and gives us the strength and courage to go out and face the world as it continues to turn with chaos and confusion.

People of God, we are entering into the season of Pentecost, the season of the church, the season where we take up Christ's mantle and say this is what we have been prepared for. Some days will feel like going through the motions and some days will feel like you couldn't imagine doing anything but gospel work. But no matter the day, no matter the circumstance, the gift never leaves, the gift remains. You are precious. You are beloved. You are more than equipped for the work. Say it in English, say it in French, say it in Latin, say it in some forgotten language that doesn't even exist anymore, it doesn't change. You are beloved and you are equipped. Let all who hear know and understand. **AMEN!!!**