

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

Vicar Jason Fugate

June 5, 2022

Grace to you and peace from God, our Creator, and our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. Well, I must say, you all are *pretty* lucky that I am here with you all today. Let me explain. Recently, I was scrolling on the internet on one of my favorite sports news websites. As I clicked between the scores and stats of the NBA playoffs and the baseball season, I was shocked by a life altering surprise. I received a pop-up advertisement that I was the one millionth visitor to that web page and due to this, I had won a considerable amount of money!

Some things are just too good to be true, aren't they? No, I am here this morning because I did not follow that link to untold unfortunes or, much more likely, an inevitable data security breach. I would imagine many of you, like me, were brought up in families who valued sensibility and pragmatism. You were taught at home, in school, and in church, to be optimistic, but not too optimistic, about what the future has in store. That old adage, "if something is too good to be true, it probably is," was a phrase I knew before I even fully knew what it was suggesting.

This skepticism is useful in a world where grifters, scams, and danger could be around the corner but as we observe this festival of Pentecost, we should consider how we limit ourselves from embracing God's expansive new possibilities and love.

I believe, in our lesson from Acts, the most relatable characters are the ones who are skeptical. Wind, fire, and new language materialize while many are gathered for the Feast of Weeks, a Jewish holiday celebrating the harvest time of wheat and later, commemorating God's interaction with Moses when passing down the Torah.

These miracles occurring start where the disciples are gathered and move out into the town square where a crowd gathers to observe the apostles and other disciples speaking in tongues. It's important to remember that this is a time where Jesus, who these followers are proclaiming is the Messiah, has been crucified, died, raised to new life, and ascended into heaven.

This turn of events has been far from the expectations of what the messiah would come to do. Now, follow that up with an unbelievable witnessing of a miracle and the suggestion from the skeptical crowd makes a lot of sense. "They are filled with new wine."

This skepticism, the urge to protect our own understanding, to turn inward and focus on our small piece of knowledge in a world much bigger than our capacity of comprehension, is one we become familiar with. With all the knowledge and development since these Biblical times, skepticism has increased around faith in God and faith in a future shaped by the goodness of God.

Christ is God, the Creator revealed in human flesh, a glimpse of how we can understand an unknowable God. This revelation is expressed through God, the Holy Spirit. Revelation that even through our own limited framework for an ever loving

and ever expansive God, we can come to feel and know God's love in small part through one another. This revelation in the Holy Spirit is what inspires new knowledge in the world and shapes all other action through it.

Revelation, new knowledge, new experience, God breaking into the plane of consciousness and revealing the good; the good in this world, the good in ourselves, the good that God has created. Pentecost is the moment in scripture where this breaking in is made most tangible and illustrated for us how God continues to work each day in our world through our community.

God's truth and justice is revealed through God's creation and we are strengthened by God to seek this truth and enact this justice within our ever-expanding community.

It feels to be good to be true, that God continues to be present in our lives and that we are continually having revelation despite the world's emphasis on acceptance of what is unjust or untrue. We, in this community of faith, reject the forces that would have us give in to injustice, deception, or the absence of God and we come to this place to be reminded that the Holy Spirit dwells within us.

The Holy Spirit inspires us to an understanding that we are totally reliant on God, and in recognizing this humility we come to desire equality and love for each one of God's people, bar none.

The Holy Spirit within us empowers us to go forth, proclaiming the good news of

Christ Jesus, the forgiveness of sin, and to take the steps toward equality and love for all people we encounter. Our reading for Pentecost ends in the middle of Peter's sermon to those who are gathered. I'd like to read what happens after this amazing act of the Holy Spirit, after the wind, flame, and word of God being shared.

Picking up at verse 41: So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Be inspired by the Holy Spirit as these early Christ followers were. Continue to welcome people into this community and share in the revelation that God gives to us. I know as I depart from my time here at Wicker Park Lutheran Church the passion for justice and truth burns deeper in me thanks to my time in this community and the inspiration that you have given to me.

Continue to devote your time to teaching, to fellowship, to participate in meals and prayer, share what you have with all people, and spread the love that God has put on your heart.

I know that wherever I go, the community of Wicker Park Lutheran will touch those new places and paths with the truth and inspiration you have instilled in me and the relationships that have been built here. I hope that my journey ahead gives you hope and courage as well.

Hope and courage that your ministry here will extend far past this time and place. Have faith that God works through us in ways that far surpass our skepticism, knowledge, or power. I pray you continue to trust in God's power in all things and a heavenly future free of corruption, violence, hatred, and sadness is possible. Finally, go encouraged by the truth that seems too good to be true; that no matter the good byes we say today, the Holy Spirit travels within each of us, binds us together as one community, and keeps us enfolded together in the loving arms of God, both now and forever. Amen.