

**Acts 2:1-21
June 4, '17
Pentecost**

“ALL TOGETHER NOW”

I RECEIVED A BIT OF A SURPRISE EARLY THIS WEEK WHEN I HAD COMPLETED MY NEWSLETTER ARTICLE AND GIVEN ANNA THE SERMON TITLE FOR OUR OUTDOOR SIGN.

I WAS GLANCING THROUGH PREVIOUS SERMONS I’VE PREACHED ON PENTECOST SUNDAY & CAME ACROSS ONE ENTITLED, “HERE, THERE & EVERYWHERE.”

SOME OF YOU WILL UNDERSTAND MY SURPRISE IN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT SERMON TITLE AND TODAY’S SERMON TITLE.

WHAT SURPRISED EVEN MORE, THOUGH, WAS THE OPENING OF THAT SERMON.

**I BEGAN THAT SERMON ENTITLED, “HERE,
THERE & EVERYWHERE” BY SAYING THIS:**

***“I HAD INITIALLY GIVEN THIS SERMON ANOTHER
TITLE.***

ACTUALLY, IT HAD SEVERAL DIFFERENT TITLES.

***I WAS THINKING OF THE ALL-ENCOMPASSING
MESSAGE OF PENTECOST AND THOUGHT OF CALLING
IT ‘ACROSS THE UNIVERSE.’***

***BUT THEN I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE MORE
IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON THE UNITY THAT WAS
EXPERIENCED ON THAT DAY BY THE BELIEVERS & I
CONSIDERED ‘COME TOGETHER’ OR MAYBE ‘ALL
TOGETHER NOW.’”***

**THAT WAS NOT ONLY SURPRISING TO ME, BUT A
BIT UNNERVING AS WELL, BECAUSE I HAD**

ABSOLUTELY NO RECOLLECTION WHATSOEVER OF THAT OPENING OF A PENTECOST SERMON.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE YET TO CATCH THE CONNECTION, ALL OF THOSE POSSIBLE SERMON TITLES HAPPEN TO BE TITLES OF SONGS BY THE BEATLES.

THOUGH THERE WAS ANOTHER RECENT 50TH ANNIVERSARY CONNECTED WITH THE BEATLES, THERE'S ALSO A 50TH ANNIVERSARY FOR THE SONG THAT SERVES AS OUR TITLE.

JUST THREE WEEKS AGO MARKED THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIVE-HOUR RECORDING SESSION THAT PRODUCED THE SONG "ALL TOGETHER NOW."

WHILE I DIDN'T THINK OF THOSE *OTHER* BEATLE SONGS IN PREPARING MY PENTECOST

SERMON THIS YEAR, I DID THINK OF “ALL TOGETHER NOW.”

LUKE OPENS HIS PENTECOST STORY BY SAYING “*WHEN THE DAY OF PENTECOST HAD COME, THEY WERE ALL TOGETHER NOW IN ONE PLACE.*”

OKAY, MAYBE I ADDED THE “NOW,” BUT YOU GET THE POINT.

I THINK THE DISCIPLES “TOGETHERNESS” WAS SIGNIFICANT.

AS WE MENTIONED LAST WEEK ON *ASCENSION* SUNDAY, THE DISCIPLES WERE LIVING IN FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES.

THEY HAD TO STAY TOGETHER BECAUSE AFTER EVERYTHING THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE IN RECENT WEEKS, THEY DIDN’T KNOW WHEN THE OTHER SHOE WOULD DROP.

**THEY DIDN'T KNOW IF THEY WERE NEXT TO BE
ARRESTED BY THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES OR
ACCOSTED BY THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS.**

**BUT ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST, SOMETHING
HAPPENED THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING.**

**WE SOMETIMES CALL THIS "THE BIRTHDAY OF
THE CHURCH."**

THIS IS WHEN IT ALL BEGAN.

**THIS IS WHEN THE JESUS MOVEMENT WENT
FROM A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF HIS FEAR-
FILLED FOLOWERS TO THOUSANDS OF EMPOWERED
BELIEVERS.**

**AND NO LONGER WAS THE MOVEMENT
CONFINED TO A LITTLE GROUP OF GALILEAN
FISHERMEN & SOCIAL OUTCASTS.**

**PENTECOST SIGNALLED THE EXPLOSION OF THIS
MOVEMENT TO REACH EVERY CORNER OF THE
KNOWN WORLD & ENCOMPASS EVERY AGE, RACE,
NATIONALITY & ETHNIC ORIGIN.**

**BARRIERS WERE DISMANTLED & BORDERS
WERE OBLITERATED & THESE MEN & WOMEN WERE
FILLED WITH A POWER THEY HAD NEVER
EXPERIENCED BEFORE.**

**AS WE READ THIS PASSAGE, IT APPEARS AS
THOUGH LANGUAGE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE
IN THE DISMANTLING & OBLITERATION OF THOSE
BARRIERS & BORDERS.**

**I THINK LUKE IS MAKING AN IMPORTANT POINT
HERE.**

**HE'S TALKING ABOUT DIVERSITY, BUT IN
TALKING ABOUT *DIVERSITY*, HE DOESN'T MEAN THE
ABANDONMENT OF *IDENTITY*.**

**EVERYONE UNDERSTOOD IN THEIR OWN
LANGUAGE.**

**THEY DIDN'T LOSE THEIR PERSONAL IDENTITY
BUT SOMEHOW THEY WERE ABLE TO CLEARLY
UNDERSTAND WHAT OTHERS WERE SAYING.**

THEY ENTERED INTO ONE ANOTHER'S LIVES.

THEY WALKED IN ONE ANOTHER'S SHOES.

**THEY HEARD & UNDERSTOOD & LISTENED TO
WHAT SOMEONE ELSE HAD TO SAY.**

**ONE OF THE GREATEST LESSONS OF PENTECOST
IS A LESSON IN COMMUNICATING WITH ONE
ANOTHER.**

**HAS THERE EVER BEEN A GREATER NEED FOR
THAT PENTECOST LESSON THAN NOW?!**

**MANY YEARS AGO – DECADES AGO, IN FACT -
PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER & SEMINARY PROFESSOR,
HUGH THOMPSON KERR, THE MAN WHO INITIATED
THE IDEA OF WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY, WROTE
SOMETHING ABOUT COMMUNICATION.**

**HE SAID, “*OUR FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE IS NOT
A FAILURE OF TECHNIQUE BUT OF WILL. WE DON’T
WANT TO COMMUNICATE . WE’D RATHER SHOUT ONE
ANOTHER DOWN.*”**

**THE PENTECOST STORY IS A REMARKABLE
STORY OF PRECISELY THE OPPOSITE.**

**IT’S A STORY ABOUT BREAKING DOWN
DIVISIONS.**

**IT'S ABOUT BROADENING OUR HORIZONS &
EXPANDING OUR VISION.**

**THAT'S WHAT THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
MEANS.**

**ALL TOO OFTEN, THOUGH, WE'D RATHER
REMAIN CONFINED IN THE FEAR & SUSPICION THAT
ENGULFED THE PRE-PENTECOST DISCIPLES.**

**STEPPING OUT OF THAT FEAR & SUSPICION
MIGHT REQUIRE US TO ABANDON OUR LONG-HELD
PREJUDICES & DEEPLY-IMBEDDED HOSTILITIES.**

**IT TAKES STRENGTH & COURAGE TO LIVE AS
PENTECOST BELIEVERS!**

**A WOMAN NAMED SARA MILES DISCOVERED
THIS POWERFUL TRUTH.**

**SARA WAS RAISED AS AN ATHEIST & LIVING – AS
SHE SAYS – “AN ENTHUSIASTICALLY SECULAR LIFE.”**

SHE SAID, “I WAS CERTAINLY NOT INTERESTED IN BECOMING A CHRISTIAN OR, AS I THOUGHT OF IT RATHER LESS POLITELY, A RELIGIOUS NUT.”

ONE SUNDAY MORNING THOUGH, PURELY ON A WHIM, SARA MILES WALKED INTO A CHURCH, ATE A PIECE OF BREAD AND TOOK A SIP OF WINE AND FOUND HERSELF – IN THAT MOMENT – RADICALLY TRANSFORMED.

SHE WAS 46 YEARS OLD & IT WAS THE FIRST TIME SHE’D EVER TAKEN COMMUNION AND IT CHANGED EVERYTHING.

**YOU SEE, THAT’S WHAT PENTECOST IS ABOUT.
IT’S ABOUT CHANGING EVERYTHING FOR US.
IT’S ABOUT SEEING PEOPLE IN A NEW WAY.
IT’S ABOUT LISTENING TO ONE ANOTHER IN
LOVE & SENSITIVITY & UNDERSTANDING.**

AMONG OTHER LESSONS WE MIGHT LEARN FROM THE PENTECOST EVENT, I THINK LUKE IS TRYING TO IMPRESS THIS ONE UPON US MORE THAN ANY OTHER.

HE WANTS US TO SEE THAT OUR LIVES CAN BE TRANSFORMED BY BEING OPEN TO THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING INSIDE OF US.

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO SARA MILES.

SARA DIDN'T STOP AT BEING FED & NOURISHED HERSELF AT THE LORD'S TABLE.

SHE STARTED A FOOD PANTRY AND GAVE AWAY LITERALLY TONS OF FRUIT & VEGETABLES AND CEREAL AROUND THE SAME COMMUNION TABLE WHERE SHE HAD FIRST RECEIVED THE SACRAMENT.

THEN SHE ORGANIZED NEW PANTRIES ALL OVER HER CITY TO PROVIDE HUNDREDS OF

HUNGRY FAMILIES WITH FREE GROCERIES EACH WEEK.

WITHOUT ANY COMMITTEES OR MEETINGS OR EVEN AN OFFICIAL TELEPHONE NUMBER, SARA RECRUITED DOZENS OF VOLUNTEERS AND RAISED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS.

IT ALL BEGAN BECAUSE SHE ALLOWED THE HOLY SPIRIT TO WORK IN HER LIFE.

IT BEGAN BECAUSE SHE WAS WILLING TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS THAT PREVIOUSLY WOULD HAVE SEPARATED HER FROM – FIRST OF ALL, THOSE IN THE CHURCH AND – SECONDLY, THOSE WHOSE BACKGROUND & LIFESTYLE MAY HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT FROM HER OWN.

IF ONE SINGLE PERSON CAPTURED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN DO SUCH EXTRAORDINARY THINGS,

**WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE TO HAVE A WHOLE
CHURCH FULL OF PEOPLE CAPTURED LIKE THAT!?**

**LET'S GO BACK TO THAT SONG THAT SERVES AS
OUR TITLE – “ALL TOGETHER NOW.”**

BASICALLY, THOSE ARE THE SONG'S LYRICS.

**ASIDE FROM A CHILDLIKE “A-B-C” & “1-2-3” AND
A FEW OFF-THE-CUFF THROWAWAY LINES, THE
SONG CONSISTS OF THOSE 3 WORDS – “ALL
TOGETHER NOW.”**

**IT'S SUNG SLOWLY – EMPHASIZING EACH
SYLLABLE – “ALL TO-GE-THER NOW” AND THEN
QUICKLY – RUNNING THE WORDS TOGETHER –
“ALLTOGETHERNOW.”**

**YOU HEAR IT 40 TIMES WITHIN THE SONG – 16 IN
A ROW AT THE VERY END.**

“ALL TOGETHER NOW.”

**THOSE OF YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE SONG ARE
ALREADY SINGING IT, AREN'T YOU?**

IT WAS WRITTEN BY PAUL MCARTNEY.

**IN TALKING ABOUT IT, HE SAYS, “*IT’S REALLY A
CHILDREN’S SONG.*”**

***I HAD A FEW YOUNG RELATIVES AND I WOULD
SING SONGS FOR THEM.***

***I USED TO DO A SONG FOR KIDS CALLED
‘JUMPING ‘ROUND THE ROOM,’ VERY SIMILAR TO ‘ALL
TOGETHER NOW.’***

***THEN IT WOULD BE ‘LYING ON YOUR BACKS’ & ALL
THE KIDS WOULD HAVE TO LIE DOWN.***

***THEN IT WOULD BE ‘SKIPPING ‘ROUND THE
ROOM’, THEN ‘JUMPING IN THE AIR’.***

***IT’S A PLAY AWAY COMMAND SONG FOR
CHILDREN.”***

**FIRST OF ALL, YOU CAN IMAGINE THE CHAOS
UNCLE PAUL WOULD HAVE CAUSED IF HE CAME FOR
A VISIT AND HAD ALL THE NIECES & NEPHEWS
ENGAGED IN A SONG HE CALLED “JUMPING ‘ROUND
THE ROOM!”**

**BUT WHAT FUN IT IS FOR CHILDREN TO DO ALL
OF THOSE THINGS – JUMPING ‘ROUND THE ROOM,
LYING ON YOUR BACK, SKIPPING ‘ROUND THE ROOM
& JUMPING IN THE AIR.**

**IT’S EVEN MORE FUN WHEN YOU’RE DOING
THEM “ALL TOGETHER NOW.”**

**SO IT IS WITH THE THINGS THE HOLY SPIRIT
INVITES US TO DO.**

**ON OUR OWN, WE’RE FEARFUL & SUSPICIOUS.
TOGETHER, WE FIND STRENGTH & POWER –
STRENGTH TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS & POWER TO**

**BUILD UP RELATIONSHIPS – RELATIONSHIPS THAT
ENABLE US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER, LISTEN TO ONE
ANOTHER, CARE FOR ANOTHER & BE THERE FOR
ONE ANOTHER --- AND TO DO SO “*ALL TOGETHER
NOW.*” AMEN.**

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