



Witnessing Fervently

Encounter Prayer:

Dear God,

We adore your precious name. We give thanks for your grace and mercy. We give you thanks for Jesus Christ and for the promise and power of the Spirit. Help us to lay claim to the power of the Spirit in our lives so that we may be your witnesses throughout the earth.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen!

Encounter God:

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?

Encounter Neighbor:

What good have you done for someone else this week?

Encounter Scripture: Acts 1:3-11

“After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ So, when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will

restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’”

This Sunday we celebrate Pentecost. Commonly known as the birthday of the church. The word [Pentecost](#) comes from a Greek word meaning fiftieth. The Jewish Festival of Pentecost (called *Shavuot*, meaning "weeks" in Hebrew) falls on the fiftieth day after the original Passover. On that day, God gave the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Christian festival of Pentecost falls on the 50th day after the resurrection of Jesus. (<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-pentecost>)

After Jesus' resurrection, he appeared to the disciples over the course of forty days. Forty days or years as we have discussed in previous sermon guides is a period of preparation during

which God fully instructs people. The writer of Acts uses the term “many convincing proofs” (tekmh"rion tekmerion) is found only here in the NT. It means to use hard evidence to convince the skeptics. We can look all around us and see evidence of Jesus' resurrection. The best evidence that we can provide to skeptics is telling our own experience of the living Jesus Christ. Simply put, we are witnesses to the resurrection of the living Christ. The prospect of sharing our story maybe extremely terrifying to some. We may fear rejection, being laughed at, or being called a crazy Christian. The good news is that God has given us the promise to carry out our purpose. God has some amazing things for us! But in order to experience a powerful move of God in our lives, we must wait for the promise, accept the promise, and walk in the promise. The promise is God's Spirit. The Spirit enables us to mediate God's word and perform the ministry the God calls us to do. The same Spirit that is Jesus is the same Spirit that empowers us.

During Christmas, we celebrate that God gave his Son, the perfect gift. During Easter, we celebrate that Jesus gave his life so that we may be born anew. During Pentecost, we celebrate the giving of the Spirit by Father and Son and the birth of the church. In each case, someone was given so that we might live abundantly, triumphantly, fully as one people of God. We need to only read the newspapers, tune into the news, or check your favorite news app to see that we are greatly divided as a nation, as a denomination, and even as a community. Sin is the reason for division. God's intention is for oneness! Through our, Spirit enabled witness in both words and deeds we are called to invite the world to turn away from sin and participate in the kingdom of God. The Spirit makes us one, but the system of the world seeks to divide.

The Spirit is like the wind. Wind can be destructive, just ask anyone who has heard a

tornado coming and seen its aftermath, but it can also be creative. When we look at the mountains and admire their beauty, we are admiring how the wind has shaped those mountains. When we admire the sailboats on the lake and sea, we are witnessing the power of the wind. Imagine what would happen if we let the Spirit shape us. We could share mountaintop experiences that God has promised us. Imagine if we let the Spirit move us. Imagine where God could take us together.

The Spirit is like fire. The flames of fire are often thought of in terms of their destructive nature. Yet fire can also purify and can be used for the holy purpose of making a sacrifice to God. Fire is what God used to speak to Moses in the bush that would not burn up. Imagine what will happen if we allow the Spirit to burn away racism, classism, jealousy, snobbery, insecurities, and everything that divides us. Imagine what God could reveal to us and do through us. Although COVID-19 has made it difficult for us to gather in one place, the Spirit of God can empower us wherever we are gathered, online, at home, or in the sanctuary. So, go out into the world empowered by the Spirit to witness to God's faithfulness, grace, mercy, and the truth that Jesus is alive.

Encounter Heads:

What is Pentecost?

How do we move beyond rancor and division to be a vibrant church in mission and ministry?

How do we witness in a way that people can know/experience the Jesus we serve and love?

Encounter Heart

Share the “convincing proof” that Jesus is alive based on your own experience of Jesus at work in your life.

How can we learn to rest/work in the Spirit?

Share ways you invite the Spirit into your life, marriage, family, home, and office.

Encounter Hands:

Did you cause harm in word or deed to someone this week? (self-examination). If so, confess your sin to God, then seek to reconcile with your brother or sister.

Share your prayer concerns and celebrations.

Ask a member of the group to pray for the concerns and give thanks for the celebrations.

Notes Sections

Prayer Concerns:

Celebrations:

Daily Reflection Questions

Where have I seen God at work in my life today?

What is one thing that I am thankful for?

What is one thing that broke my heart today?

What is one good thing did I do for someone else today?