

Devotionals: LifeGroup

Date: May 28, 2023

Text: Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23

Theme: Reanimated...for Global Mission

Belong Our world seems to become smaller and smaller as our ability to communicate expands in ways that didn't seem possible all that long ago. Whether it's through 24 hour news coverage, to the reach of email, text messages or cell phones, to the explosion of television shows that teach us about the world in which we live, to the reach of the internet to the far away places on our planet—all of the advances in communication allow us the possibility to get to know more about each other, which makes us realize that the world doesn't seem so big after all.

The explosion of global communication helps us realize our deep desire to live in community with each other—with the primary way of achieving community being through communication.

This week's text will explore our desire for community and mission and how our increasing global awareness allows us to look around our own neighborhoods and begin to see opportunities to join in community with neighbors that may, on the outside, appear to be very different from us but to whom God urges us to reach out through the love God has placed within us.

Prayer... Heavenly Father, we open our hearts to learn how we can reach out and recognize opportunities to help others connect to you. Our desire is to focus on your mission for us in this world and ask for your help so that we may become active parts of your global mission. Amen.

Believe Read Acts 2:1-21. The text opens on the day of Pentecost which, from the perspective of this text, was the Jewish harvest festival of Shavuot. Described in the book of Leviticus as an annual feast celebrated on "the day after the seventh Sabbath" or fifty days after Passover, Shavuot was also known as the Festival of Weeks and commemorated the time when the first fruits were harvested and brought to the temple, traditionally known as the Festival of the First Fruits. It was also a celebration of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses.

The festival would have brought many people together from many different places, speaking many different languages. When the crowd started to hear the disciples speaking about "the wonders of God" in their own language they were amazed but also confused. Peter realized there was a gap between what the crowd witnessed and how they interpreted what they were experiencing when they began to ridicule the disciples. He knew he needed to bridge the gap by interpreting for the crowd what was actually happening. In order for the crowd to understand, Peter knew he had to reach out

to them by finding something familiar. Searching his mind for a way to explain it, he found a common denominator in the Prophet Joel's words, linking his prophecy to Jesus and the events they had just witnessed.

•*What do you think is the significance of using Joel's words? What are some of the links between Jesus like, the Holy Spirit and Joel's prophecy? How would you describe Peter's action as spreading the Good News? What role does communication have in global mission?*

Read John 20:19-23. Imagine the scene. Jesus was crucified a few days before and the disciples, now alone and fearing for their lives, have locked themselves in a room for safety. One can imagine the raw emotion in the room as the disciples discussed and wondered about the recent events. The disciples were also likely trying to figure out what will happen to them and what in the world they will do next when Jesus appears. He calms their fears by reassuring them through his words and showing them his hands and side.

However Jesus had more on his mind than to just reassure his disciples—he knew his message would not go anywhere if they were going to stay locked in a room. He needed them to go out and share the good news and the only way to do that was to go to them personally. His reassurance was to not only allay their fears but also get them focused on their mission.

•*Do you think Jesus appears in our lives? If so, in what ways? How does forgiving others fit into mission? How does the giving of the Holy Spirit connect to the Great Commission? How do Jesus' words, "I am sending you," fit into global mission? Can global mission apply within our community? If so, how?*

Become When we think of global mission, the first things that often come to mind are the great works being done in far away places by missionaries. Most of us won't have the opportunity to travel overseas on mission trips and may wonder if the chance at participating in global mission is something that is even possible.

Jesus' words call us to share our lives and faith with all people regardless of the racial, ethnic, economic, generational or belief boundaries. None of us has to travel far to find people that are very different from ourselves, we need only look at the places we work, the schools we attend, in our neighborhoods and many other places in our own communities. Global mission means anywhere on the globe, and for most of us that will mean developing relationships close to home. Whether it's through a kind word, lending a helping hand, sharing a meal, giving comfort or any other action motivated from love, God has wired us for mission and, when we think about it, we don't have to go very far.

Prayer... Lord God, we recognize your desire for us to reach out to others but we don't always see the need or recognize the opportunities you place before us. We seek your continued guidance in helping us understand how we can join with others and together form a community that is actively pursuing your mission by connecting to the compassion you've placed within us. Amen.

Devotionals: DailyWalk on the Rock

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Day 1: Monday —“Peace Be With You!” On the night of his resurrection, Jesus comes to his fear-filled disciples, who are hiding behind locked doors, and speaks words of blessing and hope, saying, “Peace be with you!” But what does he mean by this? Read John 20:19-23. Is this benediction of peace the promise of an easy, strife-free life, or is it something more, something even better? What insights do you glean in Isaiah 26:3-4; Romans 15:13; Ephesians 2:14a; and Philippians 4:4-7? The peace Jesus offers is peace from God and peace with God through Jesus. Praise Jesus, our Prince of Peace.

Day 2: Tuesday —Blessed to Be a Blessing!

In Genesis, God calls Abram (Abraham) and gives him great and precious promises; read 12:1-3, noting the concept of “blessed to be a blessing.” Now notice a similar promise and commission in John 20:19-23. Jesus reveals himself to the disciples, speaks words of benediction (blessing), breathes the Spirit over them, and tells them that as people respond (or don’t respond) to their proclamation of the Gospel, they can announce God’s forgiveness (or withhold it). Do Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 help you to better understand this ministry of reconciliation? Tell Jesus you want to be a blessing as you share the message of peace with God through Jesus.

Day 3: Wednesday —“As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You.”

Over and over, Jesus tells his followers about their mission to the world. They weren’t just blessed to bask in being blessed; they were blessed for mission. Read Matthew 9:35-38; 28:18-20; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21; and Acts 1:1-8. We too have a mission; we are to witness to Jesus’ atoning sacrifice and saving grace and tell others what Jesus has done for us. Pause a moment and ponder again the harvest image in Matthew 9. Our witness is like a seed we sow. It is the Spirit who prepares the soil (someone’s heart) and causes the seed to take root and grow. Re-read the Luke 24 and Acts 1 texts. Thank God for the work of the Spirit and for the joy being sent.

Day 4: Thursday —An Ancient Celebration, A New Harvest

Read Acts 1:4-9 and 2:1-21. We think of Pentecost as a Christian commemoration, and it is, but it is also an ancient Jewish celebration (*Leviticus 23:15-21*; *‘pente’ means 50*), a time when Jews from all over gathered in Jerusalem to give thanks for the spring harvest’s first fruits. Jesus used physical miracles as signs point-

ing to spiritual truths; likewise, the gathering of the harvest’s first fruits points to the Spirit’s initial harvest of new believers (*Acts 2:14,21,41*). Ponder God’s perfect timing for the outpouring of the Spirit: thousands had gathered from all nations (*2:1-11*) and, thus, heard the Gospel message. Pray that we, like Peter, will also share the Gospel.

Day 5: Friday —The Outpouring of the Spirit Fulfilled Prophecy

Early in his Pentecost sermon, Peter tells the crowd that prophecy was being fulfilled in their midst (*Acts 2:14-21*); earlier Jesus had done the same (*Luke 4:14-21*). As we read/meditate on our texts, ask the Spirit to give you eyes to see that God is still acting in our midst today. Notice the manifestations of the Spirit’s powerful presence (*Acts 2:1-3*); consider that God had brought the world to Jerusalem to hear the message (*2:5-11*). Is God bringing the nations to our communities today? If so, like Peter, do we share the Gospel? Should we be surprised if we are misunderstood (*John 15:20-21*; *Acts 2:13*)? Read 2 Corinthians 1:20-22, and let it guide your prayer and praise.

Day 6: Saturday —The Message for (Our) Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, World...

Read Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-21,36-41; and 4:12. The outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost empowered the disciples for witness (*1:8*); those who believed also received the Spirit (*2:38*), so they, in turn, could witness to what God had done in their lives. Later, when persecution caused believers to be scattered beyond Jerusalem, the story of Jesus was taken to the world (*8:1,4*; *11:19-21*). God’s prophecy through Joel (*Acts 2:16-21*) continues to be fulfilled today, as God pours out the Spirit and sends us out in Jesus’ name. Note: to ‘prophesy’ (*Acts 2:18*) means to proclaim as well as foretell. Tell Jesus you want to be a witness; pray your words and life will tell of Jesus’ love.

Day 7: Sunday —Hearing the Gospel; Sharing the Gospel

We cannot share what we do not have. Ponder this as you read Acts 2:1-21 [*Consider also reading Acts 10:1-11:18, an account which reveals how God continues to grow Peter’s understanding of the extent of God’s love and grace.*] Feast on God’s Word; meditate on God’s promises; allow the Spirit to feed your soul (reanimate you) and prepare you to tell others of Jesus’ love. Sing/pray Hankey’s lyrics: “I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest...I love to tell the story...of Jesus and his love...”