

## Pentecost

In all of the excitement leading up to the royal wedding yesterday a Michael Curry bingo card appeared on Twitter. Some enterprising person created a card with phrases taken from our Presiding Bishop's sermons and speeches. The idea was to listen to his sermon during the royal wedding and then check off each box as he said that phrase. Bishop Curry must have liked the idea, because he retweeted it.

One phrase that was not on the card is a sobering one. Frequently he talks about "the nightmare the world often is." I'm not surprised it wasn't on the bingo card. Who wants to hear about a dark world at a royal wedding? Fortunately, Bishop Curry doesn't stop there; he also speaks of the dream that God intends for the world. I find myself saying something similar when I speak about taking the light of Christ out into the dark world. I'm sure you can provide your own list about the world's darkness, why Bishop Curry refers to it as being a nightmare.

Our readings this morning have something to say about a dark world. The story of the disciples caught up in the rushing wind and tongues of fire, speaking many languages others can understand, is the reversal of the Tower of Babel story way back in Genesis. In that story, God sowed confusion among those who thought they could be like God. On the Day of Pentecost, which the Jews celebrated as the day when God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, the Holy Spirit appeared so that the good news of Jesus Christ could be understood by all nations in their own language.

As the commotion around the disciples attracted attention and people gathered, some skeptics sneered that they were drunk. Peter stood up and denied it. Then he started to preach. Of all the passages in the Bible, he chose an obscure one from the minor prophet Joel. It's an odd choice. The book of Joel begins with a long lament about a devastating locust plague. (It's remarkable how many kinds of locusts he described.) But then Joel went on to talk about the end of the world, the end of time, the last days. That's the part Peter focused on. In those last days, Joel said, *everyone* would prophesy and have visions and dreams. All of creation will be involved, including solar and lunar eclipses. Peter preached about it as though it were just around the corner. It would be the transformation of a dark world.

Paul used even more evocative language in his letter to the church in Rome. All of creation is groaning in labor pains, Paul wrote, waiting for new life to be born. We groan, too. Even though we experience the first fruits of the Spirit, and even though that Spirit has come upon us, we still wait with eager longing. We know there is still darkness, still nightmares in the world, and we wait earnestly for God to make all things right.

In the midst of this darkness, we hear from Jesus that God will send someone to walk alongside us, called to our aid. That's the literal meaning of who Jesus says is coming. The word he uses is Paraclete in Greek, Advocate in Latin, both meaning one called to our aid. We say the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Spirit is a huge presence, as it was on that Day of Pentecost. Sometimes the Spirit is a sigh too deep for words. Loud or soft, the Spirit comes to help us and dwells within us.

We know that the Spirit is within us because we were all sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. This morning we'll get a chance to witness that promise again as two children are baptized. We'll remember our own commitment as we recite the Apostles' Creed and renew our baptismal vows.

An insert in your bulletins this morning provides more evidence of the Holy Spirit flowing through our church. A few months ago, the Don and Mary Challed Endowment for Outreach distributed seed money to six long-standing groups at Trinity Cathedral, asking them to find creative ways to use it for the benefit of our surrounding community. Today, Pentecost Sunday, they are reporting to you what they have done. The list is impressive. Many struggling people will experience hope in their lives because of us – those in poverty, homeless, or suffering from mental illness or domestic violence. Children will receive literacy, math, and arts education which their families could not otherwise afford. These offerings reveal the fruit of the Spirit as together we do Christ's work.

Although I got up early yesterday and watched the royal wedding, I hadn't printed out the Michael Curry bingo card, so I don't know how that turned out. I do know that he said nothing about the nightmare the world often is. Instead, he talked about love, being made by a Power of love, and love's power to heal and to liberate. I see that in Trinity Cathedral. I see our glimpse of the dream God intends for the world. I see it in the faces of the newly baptized and their parents, godparents, and grandparents. I see it in the generosity and creativity of those who accepted the Challed Endowment challenge. But most of all I see it in all of you, who faithfully strive each day to make God's dream come true in your own part of the world, in spite of all the difficulties you encounter. You are truly a blessing to the world. As Bishop Curry would say, God love you, God bless you, and may God hold us all in those almighty hands of love

[Pentecost: Acts 2:1-21; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-16:15.]