

**Scripture Lesson:** Romans 8:6, 14-17, 26

Pew Bible N.T. pg. 147-148

<sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace... <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of oppression to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup>it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him... <sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

**Chorus W&S #3117:** *"Rule of Life"*

*Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can!*

**Scripture Lesson:** Acts 2:1-18

Pew Bible N.T. pg. 111

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. <sup>5</sup>Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." <sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, "They're filled with new wine." <sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young shall see visions, and your old shall dream dreams. <sup>18</sup>Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

**Response to the Word**

One: This is the Word of God for the people of God

**All: Thanks be to God!**

**Romans 8:6, 14-17, 26 and Acts 2:1-18**  
**06/08/2025 – Saginaw First U.M.C.**  
**Not Just the Way It Is**  
**Pastor Amy Terhune**

I want to start this morning by telling you about these three young people who have just taken a leap of faith with us today to be confirmed and commit their lives to Jesus Christ and His church. All three of these young people are smart – way smarter than I was in middle school. They're creative and curious and full of life and energy. They ask some deep questions. They want to understand and engage the world. They're not jaded or cynical. They are kind and compassionate and accepting of others. They're willing to stand up for what they believe. Ethan is full of energy and enthusiasm. He will try anything. He will take on any challenge. He will out-sing everyone in this room. This kid does not know the meaning of the word "can't". Jude is a little more reserved, but witty and wise beyond his years. He's active in sports and interested in a wide array of topics. He has a deep faith and a deep well of empathy for others. And Lexi is so confident and so poised, a hard worker with a great sense of humor and a certain carefree nature about her that invites everyone else to just be themselves.

When I work on sermon, I keep my audience in mind, and today – Ethan, Jude, Lexi – it's you. Everyone else gets to listen in. Hopefully they'll find it spiritually nourishing. But you are my focus today. I tried to think about what I would have wanted a preacher to say to me when I was your age, and that led me down a bit of a rabbit hole. I was your age in 1986. The space shuttle challenger blew up that year. The Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster happened that year. Revolution in the Philippines happened that year. On a more personal note, my dad took a new job, so the whole family packed up and moved from the Chicago area to the Detroit area in October that year. But what I remember most about 1986 is that was the year I discovered Casey Kasem's America's Top 40 on the radio every Saturday morning (it was much older than that – it's just the year I found it!). Kasem he would count down the most popular songs in the nation, and I listened with bated breath to see where my favorites landed in the countdown. I made sure to have a blank cassette tape in my boom box, and I was ready to hit record if a favorite song came on, because the only other way to get music in 1986 was to save your money and then get your mom to take you to the mall so you could go to Tower Records and buy the album, which had the song you wanted, and about 10 other songs that you did not.

That fall, as we were packing and moving and unpacking and getting adjusted to a new town, new school, new job, new church, new neighbors, new friends, new life, the #1 song on America's Top 40 was Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band "That's Just the Way It Is". Bryan sang it for us earlier while we were collecting the offering, and if you didn't catch it, the gist of the song is this: Verse 1 says that there's poverty in the world and some people are kinda judgmental about it, and that's just the way it is. Verse 2 says there's racism and division in this world, and not everyone has the same chances, and that's just the way it is. Verse 3 says even when we pass laws to help, laws don't change hearts and minds, and that's just the way it is. Which is depressing. But the key to the song is the last line of the chorus: Ah, but don't you believe it. In other words, don't accept that this is just the way it is. Some things need to be imagined before they can become reality. Your young will have vision and your old will dream dreams.

Today, is Pentecost, sometimes called the Birthday of the Church, because it's the day God sent the Holy Spirit out upon God's people. The disciples have been gathered in an Upper Room for a few months now. It's in the upper room that Jesus shares his last meal with his disciples. It's in the upper room that they hide out in fear after Jesus is crucified. It's in the upper room that Thomas and the

other disciples first encounter Jesus alive after the resurrection. And it's in that upper room that Jesus continues to meet with them for 40 days, reminding them of all his teachings and speaking together about the Kingdom of God. Then he takes them just outside Jerusalem, to the Mount of Olives where he had prayed the night he was arrested, and there, he is swept up to heaven in a cloud, promising them that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit. They return to Jerusalem, to that same upper room, and they pray and study and plan.

Fifty days after Passover, the Jews celebrate the Festival of Weeks, called Shavuot in Hebrew and Pentecost in Greek. This is when the law was delivered to Moses, and he came down the mountain glowing from his contact with God. Shavuot is a harvest festival, when the people bring the first fruits of the winter harvest (In Israel, there are two growing seasons) to honor their covenant with God and with gratitude to God for the gift of the Law. Remember that the Law was what held them together – it was their identity and their shared history.

So, it's not a coincidence that the Holy Spirit comes down on at Shavuot – at Pentecost – for it is clear the Jesus means for the Spirit to be the living force that continues to define God's people going forward. This time, God's guidance doesn't come on stone tablets. Instead, as the Prophet Jeremiah predicted, it's written on the human heart. The Holy Spirit moves within, inspiring us, uniting us, teaching us, helping us see God at work in the world and in one another. From heaven there came a sound like the rush of violent wind and filled that upper room, each one within it. It spilled out onto the street in every language known at the time, and people from all across the world not only heard each other, but understood each other, understood who Jesus was, understood what he had done in his death and resurrection, and understood the kingdom he was establishing among us, even here and now. The Spirit worked in the heart. And they came together.

The message of Pentecost is one of unity. Our world divides us, draws boundaries, tries to classify us in various ways as us and them. Be wary of a unity that exists and solidifies itself by distinguishing us from "them", whoever they might be. Even devoted Christians sometimes do that. The Spirit unifies us – all of us. There is no "them". If something is of the Spirit, it builds bridges, it learns to communicate, it reaches out, it heals, it holds, it inspires our passion and our devotion, it is loving. We saw it that first Pentecost. Day by day, people were touched by the Spirit and their lives were transformed. It still happens. Hearts change. Minds open. And people are reborn in Christ. Look for the places and moments where people are drawn together to talk, to get beyond the divisions. I can practically guarantee you that you discover the Holy Spirit moving in that.

The Spirit is also our power. Now, power can be used in at least two ways: it can be unleashed, or it can be harnessed. The energy in ten gallons of gasoline, for instance, can be released explosively by dropping a lighted match into the can. Or it can be channeled through the engine of a car in a controlled burn and used to transport us hundreds of miles. Explosions are spectacular, but controlled burns have lasting effect, staying power. The Holy Spirit works both ways. At Pentecost, the Spirit exploded on the scene in wind and fire, and thousands were affected by one burst of God's power. But the Spirit also works in us, in the church, in the mission field, with a steady burn to power us for the long haul. Through prayer, worship, fellowship, service, and a whole host of means of grace, Christians are gifted with staying power by the Holy Spirit.

A few years back, a wonderful movie came out called "Amazing Grace". It's the story of William Wilberforce, the English statesman who fought for twenty-some years to outlaw slavery in the British Empire. I've mentioned it before. If you haven't seen it, you're missing out. Wilberforce's priest was John Newton, the slave-trader turned Christian, who wrote the words to the famous hymn from which the movie takes its title. When Wilberforce seeks out Newton for advice, the old priest wants to know

why he hasn't gone straight to God for advice. What is the state of his faith, to which Wilberforce responds, "slowly, my faith is returning."

"How slowly?" asks the old preacher.

"Well, no bolts of lightning."

And Newton (portrayed by Albert Finney) looks up from scrubbing the floor and delivers an unforgettable line: "Yes. God sometimes does His work with gentle drizzle, not storms. Drip. Drip. Drip."

Drip. Drip. Drip. That's how the Spirit works more often than not. To be sure, there's fire and wind. I promise. But when you finally pass from this life to the next (a long time from now!!), you'll probably be able to count those fire and wind and lightning bolt moments on your two hands. You won't be able to count the ways the Spirit dripped and burned quietly and steadily inside you.

So, Lexi, Jude, Ethan – you three are gifted individuals with enormous potential. You have big decisions in front of you, and so many amazing opportunities, and I can't wait to see how God works in you to make this world a better place. But remember that with gifts and opportunities comes responsibility. God is counting on you to use what He has given you in positive ways. It will not always be easy. Things don't always go the way we think they will. Educational plans don't pan out. Jobs fall through. Relationships fall apart. Loss and grief can turn things upside down for a while. Temptations to take shortcuts or compromise our values come at us unexpectedly. But God has given you everything you need to weather the challenges life throws at you because God made you and God has given you Himself – the Holy Spirit within you. At times the Spirit will challenge you, prod you, humble you, and frustrate you. At other times, that same Spirit will intercede with sighs too deep for words, bringing comfort, peace, courage, inspiration and enthusiasm.

Ethan, Jude, Lexi – I pray that the Spirit works in you to draw you into unity with others – even the real jerks in your life – until you can see past their pain to their gifts and their common humanity.

I pray you let the Spirit power you – that you learn to look for what you have, not what you don't, ever mindful that both fear and faith require you to believe in something you can't yet see. Choose faith.

I pray that the Spirit never lets you settle for just the way it is, but continues to burn in you to transform the world for Jesus Christ

Ethan, Jude, Lexi, Church.... The Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born of water and the Spirit, you may live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.