

Pentecost: The Holy Rush or the Holy Hush

May 31, 2009

Would you consider yourself a creative person? Before you answer, take a moment to consider the many ways you can be creative...from cooking to art to writing to mechanics to writing to gardening and a host of ministry opportunities here...singing, playing music or bells, teaching Sunday School, helping with the youth, working at a camp, or some other kind of creative outlet. In some way, most people are creative. It is part of our being made in the image of God. We are all made in God's image, although that image is not perfect. Part of that image is being like God in certain ways...and one of those ways is to be creative...to create, to make music, art, beauty, to build...

The Creative process is often not very orderly or clean. In fact, it is sometimes quite messy. If you doubt that this is true, take a peak into the kitchen after someone has made you a very fancy dinner sometime. The fancier the meal, the more dishes and pots it takes...and the messier the kitchen becomes. You have to heat up all the different ingredients and sauces separately and you need a lot of pots and pans to really cook fancy food. If you are just cooking meat and potatoes, it does not take a lot of dishes...you can often do it all in one pan! My kind of cooking! I like to eat the other kind!

Sometimes the creative process is quiet and calm and orderly, and sometimes it is loud and aggressive and messy. It is just the way we are as human beings!

So, there are two ways to know if things are going well in your world, your family, home, office, church or community

If things are going well, there will be a lot of peace and quiet....

And/or

If things are going well, there will be a lot of noise and commotion...

It is true in the life of faith as well. In a life of faith, God appears to us both in the rushing mighty wind and tongues of fire of Pentecost, and in the still small voice and gentle whisper of quiet meditation and silent prayer. God is heard in song and in silence, in coming together and in being alone. In private meditation and quiet study, as well as in public worship and praise and prayer....we can hear the voice of God calling to us in many different place and times, if we will listen with our hearts open and our minds clear.

Remember, the Disciples had spent the week prior to Pentecost waiting and praying for the coming of the promised spirit before he came. God surprises us in how he comes. It is rarely how and when we expect. The children of Israel were led through the wilderness by God, who showed himself as a Pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day...literally a holy tornado for the people to see God at work while they wondered through the desert for 40 years. But God also show himself to Elijah on the mountain not in the roaring fire or the Earthquake or the rushing wind, but in a still, small whisper of a voice that Elijah had to strain to hear. The same was true of Samuel as a young child in the temple as he slept, God called out to him at night...calling him by name "Samuel, Samuel" ...

And Jesus spoke with huge crowds, broke bread and fed thousands with a young boys sack lunch of three biscuits and a couple of small fish, but he also went into the wilderness alone and encouraged his disciples to come away with him to pray.

The Holy Rush or the Holy Hush. Both are part of our lives in Christ. Both are part of God's presence and purpose, and we will experience both in our Christian walk in God's spirit.

This morning we hear again the story of Pentecost, a Holy Rush if there ever was one. The story of the stunned disciples who gather and prayed and waited for the coming of Jesus' promised spirit. Jesus had said to wait, so they waited and prayed. This was the hush part. They waited and prayed...day after day after day. Do you think they were starting to grow impatient? Yes, I think so. It had been more than a week. Almost two, and nothing had come...they continued every day, all day, to gather to read the scripture, to remember Jesus' teachings, and to pray. To pray for each other, to pray for the world, and to pray for the Spirit...Jesus had promised that his Spirit would be with them and be in them...the helper, the comforter, the source of strength and power and peace. They waited and prayed. What would happen? Who knew...maybe they would be taken to heaven like Jesus? Maybe they would receive super powers...become angels? Who knew?

And when the spirit came, he came with power! Suddenly. The Spirit came in God's time, in God's way. You can't rush God, and you can't make God do what you want. Jesus said the Spirit is like the wind, it blows where IT wants...not where you want. You can't control the wind.

When the spirit came, the first thing that happened was sound. A Loud sound...like a mighty rushing wind. The word for spirit in the old testament is the same word as for breath or wind, ROUCH..the sound of the spirit coming. It filled the house and spilled over into the neighborhood. The sound was not of soldiers or military power, but the power of God. Each Disciple...men, women, young, old, fat, thin, rich, poor, every one...not just the inner circle or the most holy, every one!

Each received the holy spirit. And on each appeared something like a tongue of fire...and each began to speak in a language not their own.

A crowd gathered, remember, this was before television. Each one heard the people speaking the story of God's wonderful acts of grace and love in their own language...and they were amazed. In their own native tongue. Not as if someone had taken Cretan in High School, but speaking it as a native....and all the other languages as well.

What a wonderful message within the message! That God speaks your language. The coming of the spirit teaches us that God is for everyone, and that there is room in the church for everyone from everywhere...and that God not only gives the spirit to each and every disciple...not holding back anyone. But he then uses them to preach the good news in the native language to those gathered. God speaks your language, completely and absolutely. He knows every nuance and every point, everything good and bad, God knows it absolutely. The language is not always national, it is often cultural. God speaks skater, he speaks heavy metal, Punk rock, he speaks country western, and more.

God's Spirit speaks our language...and he speaks to us in both Rush and Hush. I must confess that I believe that the Hush is more common. The Rush comes in special times and places. But the gentle voice comes in a 100 personal voices and languages being spoken in different places and people. The Spirit fills us with power, power of love and joy, the power of Jesus. The Disciples were afraid, but suddenly here they are speaking in public. After this, they have courage and strength that flows through them. The spirit helps us grow beyond ourselves...helps us reach forward and serve others. The Spirit challenges us and changes us, not who we are...but what holds us back. Most of us would confess to being insecure. But when the spirit comes...either in a mighty Rush or in a Hushed whisper, there is a confidence that grows within us...because

we know that God is with us and that God loves us. We know that we are called and empowered by God, and as we take those first timid steps in trusting God and laying aside our insecurities—we find victory and success and that changes us. The Spirit help us grow and become more than we were, and gives us confidence.

Pentecost celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit in a mighty Rush. But the Spirit comes in both a rush and in a hush. Both are gifts of God and we as followers of Christ experience both through out our life of faith. The Spirit is not either or, but both the still small voice and the mighty rushing wind and the roaring fire. The spirit is at work in us who believe, and that spirit grants us freedom...freedom to live in joy and peace, for in the spirit we come to know that we are loved beyond our ability to understand and that we are never, never alone. He is with us always, even to the end of the age. The spirit sets us free. As the scripture says, Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom! That freedom may be quiet and orderly, or loud and messy...but it is freedom none the less....

Happy Pentecost!