

May 24, 2020

“Pentecost Aerobics”

Prayer of Illumination: Prepare our hearts, O Lord, to accept your word. Silence in us any voice but your own; that, hearing, we may also obey your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (The Worship Book, 1970, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.))

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-21

Devotion:

Pentecost is aerobic dancing—dancing in God’s holy presence.

It is like the parable told by Edward Hays in one of his books: “News was given to Rabbi Moshe Leib that his best friend, the Rabbi of Berditchev, was seriously ill. On the Sabbath, Rabbi Leib said his friend’s name over and over in his prayers for a full recovery. When he had finished his prayers, Rabbi Leib put on a new pair of shoes which were made of Moroccan leather. He laced them up tight and then began to dance. One of his disciples who was present said, ‘The power of God flowed forth from his dancing. Every step expressed profound mystery, and a strange, unearthly light filled the house where he was. Everyone who was watching him saw the heavenly host join in his dance.’”

In Old and New Testament times, the Jewish feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21) was a time of thanksgiving for the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and a time for the remembrance of the Torah, the Law, given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. According to Jewish theology and practice the Torah (the first five books in the Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) is viewed as the living word of God. This view is comparable to how we Christians believe Jesus Christ to be God’s Living Word. Just as the Church emphasizes the importance of the written Word of God to be preached and lived out by all Christians, so does the Jewish belief that God’s word, the Torah, is to be preached and lived out by all people of the Hebraic faith.

Preaching and living out God’s word becomes an artistic expression in music, poetry, art, and even dancing. Pentecost, the birth of the Church, is traditionally symbolized by wind, fire, and the speaking of tongues. The color red is used to capture all three happenings of the Holy Spirit’s presence on Pentecost Sunday. For some people the motion of dancing described in the above parable captures the essence of Pentecost Sunday. Some people have been blessed to see the art of liturgical dance in churches’

sanctuaries or on theatrical stages. It is wonderful to see and feel the presence of God's Holy Spirit moving us to new spiritual dimensions.

Many years ago a particular Torah was shipped to the United States for safe keeping during the Holocaust of WWII. Unfortunately, this Torah was never shipped back to its original synagogue in Czechoslovakia because the German Nazis destroyed the synagogue and exterminated its people. Years after WWII this very same Torah was adopted by a Reformed Jewish Temple in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and rededicated to active service. During the rededication service there was a lot of singing and dancing among the congregants. It was described as a divine aerobic workout. Literally people could feel God's spirit beating within their hearts faster and faster as the music, the singing, and the dancing pace accelerated.

Now, we may not experience tongues of fire or a mighty wind symbolizing the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, but we can dance and do Pentecost aerobics with our hands and feet in prayer. Let the Holy Spirit beat in your hearts to the living beat of God's Holy Word of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercessory and Supplication: (Ask people what they wish to pray for today, briefly inquire about it, and pray for them. Ask them to join in your prayer.)

The Lord's Prayer: (Say the prayer in unison.) Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Blessing: "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be kind and gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)