

Sermon by Maren McLean Persaud on the Occasion of Pentecost, 2017 and 140 yr Anniversary.

Pentecost is always described as the day the church was born...

.the holy spirit came and created a community of people who were empowered to share the good news of Jesus in what they said and what they did, so that's what the disciples did, they went out as disciples to make disciples. And for me that's what it is all about. If we're not making disciples then what are we doing?

There are three big things that the holy spirit teaches us about being disciples who are making disciples...

First of all, in our reading from Corinthians, we hear about the different gifts that the spirit gives to each of us and how each of these unique gifts makes up the one body. Each of us has a call on our lives from God, to use the gifts we've been given.

And I believe God calls us to things we actually want to do, and have the gifts to do. I feel so privileged to get to do camping ministry, because it's really what I love to do, and even though it was something I felt called to, I didn't always trust that it would be something I would get to do. It's really awesome! I was just saying to some of my staff this past week, I love being at camp with them because it's pretty much guaranteed that I'm going to laugh every day. At camp I get to use the gifts I feel the spirit has given me, I get to do challenging work that gives me joy and I feel like I get to work alongside God joining in something that he is already doing.

The holy spirit gives us gifts to be used faithfully as live out Gods call on our lives as disciples.

Second, The Holy spirit came not to solve our problems but create them. For me growing up, the image of a gentle wind was always what was in my head when I thought about the holy spirit, a gentle wind that would always make us feel comforted...and while that is a good image.....the Holy Spirit is not always a gentle wind. Did you know in Celtic Christianity the symbol for the holy spirit is a wild goose?? There is nothing gentle about a wild goose. The holy spirit reveals to us where God is working and where we should be joining God.....those are the problems the spirit creates.....it allows us to see what is going on outside ourselves and that is not always something that makes us feel comfortable.

As a church we cannot look inside and plan our mission from that. That wouldn't make sense, We are supposed look outside and find the problem that God's spirit is showing us, and then plan our mission. That is what will summon you as a family of faith.....what you see outside, the problem that you encounter.....that is going to be the place where you can join God. As people called to be disciples and disciple others...we need to look outside and find the problem that the holy spirit is showing us, we need to be asking "Who needs us?" and how can we partner with God?

At Camp, a problem we felt we were being shown was that for a lot of families in New Brunswick. Camp is expensive and out of the question and rural poverty is a very real problem.

Consequently, these are the kids that need a week away at camp the most, so we have committed to never turning a child away for financial reasons, and we are committed to finding these kids and reaching out to them, and offering them this experience without thinking of our bottom line. This has been a very important piece of our mission over the last couple years.

The Holy Spirit Comes not to solve our problems but create them, and reveal to us the problems in the world where we should be joining God as we make disciples.....

Lastly, The Holy Spirit invites failure, it doesn't prevent it. The holy spirit is there to empower us and to be with us through our failures and setbacks. Failure is inevitable, especially when we're attempting to live out Gods call, and discern where it is the spirit is leading us. In 140 years of ministry I am sure that you have had your ups and downs, your failures your success and all of those things have been an important part of your history.

But as Disciples We need to intentionally entertain failure...and live boldly despite it. Once we find the problem that we are called to join God in, once we find what our challenge as a community is, then we need to experiment, innovate and count that we will fail at least once and probably a few more times after that. Especially as Christians, We should know that success doesn't always look like success, especially when we consider that it was crucifixion and death that came BEFORE resurrection and new life.

God doesn't care whether we're successful, but God does care that we are faithful.....God will work through us and in spite of us. I feel like I live that at camp every day in the summer. We mess things up a lot, but we are trying to live faithfully together and there is something tying all our messy/faithful attempts together into something sacred and good.

An ordinary moment from last summer at Medley that will forever stay with me happened one evening during staff communion, which we do once a week, but on this particular evening the chaplain said to the staff before communion "Here, let me teach you how to serve one another" his words struck me as sounding really beautiful...."Let me teach you how to serve one another"and then he told them the words to use when giving each other bread and wine. Well, it wasn't long before my beautiful, proud director moment was shattered as things fell apart.

Do you know how hard it is to wipe the common cup after each use if you're not used to it? The cloth kept getting dipped in the wine, it was absolutely soaked about half way through....people were messing up the words....there was this inside joke among the staff from something that happened at our first staff communion that everyone was remembering and they were trying and failing to hold in uncontrollable laughter.....and it ended up with them trying to serve one another as beautifully as they had been taught to, but it was messy....it was far from perfect and looked very different from a communion you would see in any church on a Sunday morning. But that night, I was still thinking about those words "Let me teach you how to serve one another" and it hit me that that is what learning to be disciples can look like....it can be

messy....as Christians on a mission, we might drop the ball, we don't always do as we should we laugh when we're not supposed to, but there is something sacred tying all our messy attempts together into something good.

And we straight up fail at camp too, I think that's been my biggest learning over the last two years....there is a lot of just living boldly as we try and discern the best way to disciple the kids whose lives, god has called us into. This week I had to make the decision to cancel a new camp we were trying, because numbers just weren't what we thought they would be.....and that's hard, especially when you put a lot of work into planning something because you really feel like this is the way to go, we did a big roll out of this camp, had a competition to name it and now its not even going to happen....but in the cancelling that camp, we've already seen how it is freeing up our efforts and energy so that they can be moved into other avenues and programs which ultimately will lead us toward the same goal of making disciples. We continue to try and live faithfully.

So knowing that we are going to fail, and knowing the holy spirit actually *invites* us to find fulfillment and victory through our failures will give us some freedom to throw ourselves into our mission, to put ourselves on the side of the most vulnerable...to take risks as a community. We need to trust that whatever the results of our efforts are our hope and future is secured not by our abilities, but by God's promise that all things will be brought to a good end.

So at Pentecost....as we celebrate the birthday of the church and your 140th anniversary, we need to remember that the Holy Spirit that came that day to the disciples, gives us each gifts of our own, reveals to us where we should be joining God with those gifts, and invites us to fail as we live boldly into that mission.

As we live boldly, lets always be on the look out for Pentecost moments. Pentecost has continued since that day that God first sent the spirit.....Pentecost happens any time the spirit is poured out....and Pentecost isn't just the big grand moments of speaking in tongues, or large successes but is in our small moments and I would argue even in the failures that teach us something about where we're headed or what we're doing.

There have been weeks at Camp Medley where what happens can only be explained as a Pentecost moment where the spirit is poured out, lives are changed and transformed even though we were distracted with what else might have been going on that week. There are some weeks at camp where all I seem to be doing is plunging toilets and calling the repairman to come fix our dishwasher and all my efforts are going into just maintaining order, and I think, this is a disaster of a week, we haven't had time to think about what the campers are getting out of this and...yet at the end of the wee, we see children who don't want to leave camp because its been a home for them.....we read the notes from the campers telling us how much the week meant and I hear stories from parents about how camp has changed their child's life. That is the work of the spirit.

So as you reflect on your past 140 years and think about where you are headed, I hope you can recall what some Pentecost moments have been for you. In what ways have you faithfully joined alongside God, where have you failed but learned, and what great failures do you want to entertain in the future!? It is exciting that even after 140 years God is still calling your community to join him, and that we each have a call on our lives from God that can be used in this mission. And so my prayer for you at St. Georges today is that you will continue to faithfully look outside to see where you can join God, that you will fail boldly and that as you go out as disciples to make disciples Gods spirit will be poured out in your lives and on your work.