

Dear Friends,

Another week, another letter, so how are you doing?

As we walk through these days, with the changing news and sometimes unclear messages, how do you respond, perhaps you find it difficult some days and are full of hope on other days, are you still shielding, or longing to go out, and unsure how the latest guidance affects you. I suspect that some days are hope-filled, while others are not so much. We watch the news, we watch and pray, we hope, and maybe sometimes we despair.

In this vein we join the praying disciples, now without Jesus they are watching and praying in the upper room, Jesus command to them to watch, pray and wait, is still ringing in their ears. The powerful words: ***“They agreed they were in this for good, completely together in prayer, the women included. Also, Jesus’ mother, Mary, and his brothers.”*** Acts 1: 14

They were in this for good- this Jesus movement, this call to watch and wait, whatever it was they were waiting for, they were in this for good, such was the call on their lives, the impact that their relationship with Jesus, as confusing as he might be, showing them a new way to live, and challenging all of the old systems and structures, they were in this for good, together! In many ways, at this time, we are the same, when I talk to you about how and where you have been worshipping I find a common thread, and that some of you have been talking to one another about that, and sharing the blessings and insights of what you have been receiving. I would encourage you to continue to do that, for in that way we discern the movement of the Spirit among us, and begin to glimpse what God is saying in these times to the churches who are Christ’s body.

So, we watch and wait and pray, but are we ready to be surprised as the disciples were by wind and fire sweeping upon them and propelling them out of their locked down state and into the world in a fresh way?

2¹⁻⁴ When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

5-11 There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn’t for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, “Aren’t these all Galileans? How come we’re hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?

***Parthians, Medes, and Elamites;
Visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,
Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene;
Immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes;
Even Cretans and Arabs!***

“They’re speaking our languages, describing God’s mighty works!”

12 Their heads were spinning; they couldn’t make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: “What’s going on here?”

¹³ Others joked, "They're drunk on cheap wine."¹⁴⁻²¹ That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: "Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk—it's only nine o'clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen:

*"In the Last Days," God says,
"I will pour out my Spirit
on every kind of people:
Your sons will prophesy,
also your daughters;
Your young men will see visions,
your old men dream dreams.
When the time comes,
I'll pour out my Spirit
On those who serve me, men and women both,
and they'll prophesy.
I'll set wonders in the sky above
and signs on the earth below,
Blood and fire and billowing smoke,
the sun turning black and the moon blood-red,
Before the Day of the Lord arrives,
the Day tremendous and marvellous;
And whoever calls out for help
to me, God, will be saved."* Acts 2: 1- 21

What a surprise that must have been, and how does it speak to us who are simultaneously locked down at home and sent out of our regular worship patterns? How are you praying at this time? Are you perhaps more conscious of and more connected with your neighbours and your families? Are you aware of the wider world? What do you discern the Spirit is saying to you, to the church, to our communities?

We do know that the story continues as Peter boldly proclaims the message of Christ crucified and risen, that the early church were together not only in prayer and worship but in caring for one another and others in ways that drew many, many more to the message because they preached not only in words but through their lives. We also know that they were persecuted, and that, that persecution pushed them even further from their roots and sent them out in all directions, into an unknown future full of risks, and yet God was with them sustaining them.

The gift of the Holy Spirit that we celebrate today is as real today as it was (he/she was, for the Spirit is a person of the Holy Trinity) then. We can have a relationship with the Holy Spirit just as we do with God the Creator and God the Son, and we are encouraged to, so in these days as we still make our way to an unknown future, both together and apart, we do need to become more attuned to what the Spirit is saying and how the Spirit is leading.

At this time, I am not able to offer any certainty about how things will be, but can only encourage you to watch, pray and trust. Trust because we are not alone, trust because the one who has called us is faithful, trust because we are called to walk with God through all of the ups and downs of life, and trust because the promise is sure, all will be well.

So, I leave you, as I often do with a picture, a poem, and a hymn.

The picture is an abstract drawing of the Spirit drawing possibilities out of chaos:



If you are a visual person you may appreciate this, if not, no matter!

The Poem:

Will you hold out hope
for me
when I have no hope?
Will you wrap compassion round me
as a blanket,
and help me to hold firm to you?
For I have not the strength
to stand alone,
tears have been my food
day and night,
and I am spent
and empty now,
and worn,
my heart is torn
by a thousand griefs,
and broken...

+
Will you sing me
a song
of love's deepest mysteries. Will you open healing

streams to me
and flood my soul with
the wonder of new life?
I long for your presence,
I need
your transforming power,
come cleanse heal and forgive me,
remake me
and renew me...

+
...for
I am spent
and empty now
and worn,
and my heart is torn
by a thousand griefs,
and broken...
+
So I fall to my knees and pray
will you hold out hope to me?

And finally, a hymn, that turns us to prayer:

*Holy Spirit, we welcome you,
Holy Spirit, we welcome you,*

*Move amongst us with holy fire
as we lay aside all earthly desire
hands reach out and hearts aspire
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome you*

*Holy Spirit, we welcome you,
Holy Spirit, we welcome you,*

*Let the breeze of your presence blow,
that your children here might truly know
how to move in the spirit's flow.*

*Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome you
please accomplish in me today
some new work of loving grace I pray
unreservedly have your way
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome you*

As always, please feel free to call me if you need anything, or if you just want to talk. May you know the deep blessing of God through the Spirit this Pentecost Season.

Peace and blessings

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Coleman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Reverend Sally Coleman

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