

We are gathered together in God's creation, and what a wonderful place to receive what God has in store for us. Since Easter, we have been learning what Christ calls us to be and to do as Easter People. Easter People are Peacemakers. We open our hearts, even the hidden, locked doors of our hearts, to Christ's peace. We then bring Christ's peace to difficult people and conflicting situations. Easter People love sacrificially, like Christ loves, without self-gain. Easter People are Unifiers who pull people together instead of tearing people apart or creating division God's people. Easter People are workers who carry on Christ's work as the hands and feet of Christ. Easter People are Believers in all that God has done, all that God is doing, and all that God will continue to do, as God comes to us and makes a home with us. Despite our lingering doubts and shortcomings, Easter People make a choice to follow Christ. We follow so closely that we cover ourselves in the dust of our master. Easter People understand that everything we do and everything we say should reflect the Holy Trinity within us.

Whew. That's a tall order. Christ knows it's a tall order. He knew his disciples could not do it on their own. Nor can we. That's why he sent us a Helper, an Advocate, a Friend to help us live out our call as Easter People. We cannot do all these things or be who God created us to be without the help of the Holy Spirit. Even though Jesus would leave the earth in the physical form, he would always be present in the spiritual form. We celebrate this incredible gift, this constant presence, on this day of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit, in the form of fire and wind, fell upon the people so long ago. They were gathered in community, just like us, and they received this gift. Three thousand people believed and became followers, workers, lovers, peacemakers, and unifiers. It all started by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

SKIT:

Person with arms crossed.

Pastor: Sometimes we're not in a place to receive. We remain closed off. There's a wonderful gift right in front of us, but we just don't know what is preventing us to open ourselves to receive.

Person with blindfold.

Pastor: Sometimes we can't see the gift. We have been surrounded in darkness for so long, we just can't see the gift right in front of us. We can't receive because we don't see the work of the Holy Spirit.

Person with headphones.

Pastor: Sometimes we just can't hear God. For whatever reason, we've tuned out the Spirit's calling, and we've grown deaf to God's voice. We can't receive because we don't listen.

Person with hands bound.

Pastor: Sometimes we feel that our hands are tied. We are bound to our jobs, our schedules, our families, our addictions, our sin. We can't receive because we just aren't free.

Person who is "busy".

Pastor: And, sometimes we're just too busy to receive. Our To-Do lists are endless. Our brains run faster than we can keep up with them. We focus on serving others, but forget to put ourselves on our care list. There's just no time! to receive.

Pastor: But the Holy Spirit hasn't forgotten about us. Our friend, our advocate, is working nonstop to help us:

To slow us down and care for us,
To free us,
To remove whatever is preventing us from listening,
To remove whatever is preventing us from seeing,
To open our hearts,

So, we all can receive this gift of the Holy Spirit. It's right in front of us, in every moment, every day. All we have to do is open ourselves to receive.

For the last few weeks, I have asked you to write down on a ribbon your vision or dream for this church. Or, rather, what you think is God's vision or dream for the church. If you haven't done that, I invite you to do that during our closing song.

The different colors of the ribbon represent different colors of fire, one of the symbols of the Holy Spirit. Just as the flames fell upon the people, forming the first church, we need the Holy Spirit to fall upon us in order to accomplish all of God's dreams for us and for Chapel of the Hills. St. Therese of Lisieux once said, "God cannot inspire unrealizable desires." So, when we become discouraged or tired, we can trust that in God's time, God's vision for this church, for us, will be accomplished.

God's vision for us is to be Easter People, to be the hands and feet of Christ. God's dream is for us to carry-on Christ's work to love, bring peace, and unify. How that is accomplished could be in many different ways, so let us continue listening for the Holy Spirit's direction.

As Easter People, we are Receivers. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It just doesn't work if we try to follow Christ without the power of the Holy Spirit. All that we are called to do and to be cannot be accomplished on our own. All the preparation that Jesus did with his disciples before his death and resurrection and after, was to make sure his disciples were ready to receive this gift of wind and fire. Jesus lived, died, and rose so that our eyes, ears, hearts, and hands would be opened to the unfathomable depth of God's love. Jesus has been preparing us all along to receive God's Spirit.

I invite you to open yourselves, open your arms, and receive this gift this morning, as we pray: Holy Spirit, we ask you to take from us whatever is blocking your gift of grace. Help us to slow down, to hear and see this gift right in front of us. Free us. Open our hearts to receive your peace, your love, your hope, your truth. Spirit of Truth, lead us to the work that you have for us, so that everyone can receive this incredible gift. Continue to be our Helper, our Advocate, so that we continue to open our hearts and receive this gift of your Spirit. Amen.