

The Rev. Timothy E. Kimbrough
Christ Church Cathedral
The Day Of Pentecost, Year A
June 12, 2011
Propers for the same

Let's get out of this place. There's nothing here anyway. Whatcha doin' tonight? Let's find something different to do. If I have to snap another pea, mow the lawn, bring the boss coffee, pick up these dirty clothes, make another meal... AGAIN, I'm going to scream. It's just so boring and I'm tired of being bored.

You've heard the refrain. Students hear it at school when a teacher's reputation for tedious teaching methods precedes him. Union workers hear it at the factory plant as the same 17mm socket wrench is used to tighten lug nuts on each new chassis that passes by. Farmers hear it from their children who cannot fathom the mystery of which their fathers speak of as they take their turn milking the cows early at 4 a.m. on Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Coaches hear it from some of the athletes in their care who simply aren't prepared to stay after practice to shoot those extra 100 free-throws. Music teachers hear it from their students who tire of scales. And parents...well parents can hear it from their children for just about any reason but especially when household chores or homework seem to be getting in the way whatever it is that 1st (TV), 2nd (computer), and 3rd (phone) screens have to offer.

It's just so boring and I'm tired of being bored. Whenever I hear this I wonder: what is the opposite of being bored? Is it just a matter of getting one's attention? Is entertainment the opposite boredom? Perhaps the opposite of boredom must have an accomplishment quality to it? Then again maybe someone who indicates that they are bored is simply seeking some kind of pleasure or satisfaction. It's hard to tell and thus easy to see how some might be confused at the notion of someone being bored.

Preachers field their share boredom complaints. If it's not the Liturgy, then it's the preaching, or the pastor's inability to carry on polite conversation. Like farmers, coaches, and parents, if the pastor is not careful he may come to believe that his primary task is to head off boredom at the pass for the congregation he serves. Preaching can become a kind of what-have-you-done-for-me-lately proposition. The internal competition for bigger, better, flashier sermon material can become quite intense. Words like exciting, relevant, eye-catching, thrilling, even 'contemporary' can come to pepper his speech and the bulletin announcements—seeking the elusive elixir for his congregation's boredom ills.

Youth pastors know the draw of the across town youth program that places a premium on entertainment value. It seems at times both the bane of their existence and their very reason to be. If gospel is to be Gospel then surely it must be interesting, surely it must be entertaining. If gospel is to be Gospel don't I have to feel it first in order to believe it.

Enter the Holy Spirit—the Day of Pentecost—the joy of all creation! You know the ad. Are you spiritually run-down? Does your baptismal sheen seem to have worn off? Do you still wonder if God's first grace was ever given to you? Step right up you need to receive this power from on high. Let this Holy Spirit take you to new heights never before imagined. I think there's even a kind of class angle to the jingle that can

suggest the Holy Spirit will move right through that blue collar humdrum life of yours and kick it up a notch.

Let's be clear—in no way am I suggesting we do not need the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; in no way do I mean that the Holy Spirit cannot or will not convict, convert, cleanse, and convey the glorious gifts of the Spirit to the Church and to the individual. It's just the suggestion that Holy Spirit-renewal means to combat boredom that I resist. To make the Holy Spirit the one who from time to time will put a little pep in your step or by whose baptism we are moved to a more intense spiritual walk is like comparing the work of the Spirit, even baptism in the Holy Spirit, to effect of one RED BULL (or maybe 3) on the student studying for finals.

The Church can't move from one caffeine fix to another—whether it be innovation in the appropriation of Scripture or the latest trend in justice interpretation or the enculturation of the Liturgy. The search for the spiritual twist equivalent to the cherry on top can only distract us from our central calling.

The Pentecost event as told in the Book of Acts means to call to mind for us the confusion of languages in Genesis at the tower of Babel. In that story, the world, working together, sought to usurp the power of God, building a tower that would reach to heaven. So God confused their languages in order that they could no longer work together. The price of humanity's pride was their confusion. In Jerusalem after the Ascension of Jesus into heaven the disciples are obedient but confused. In the humility of their confusion the Holy Spirit, as promised, descends on them like tongues of fire—and suddenly people from all walks of life are able to comprehend their Gospel preaching. This time the working together of the people of God will not be for the purpose of asserting God-like prerogative but rather for the humble preaching of the Gospel.

When John retells the Pentecost event he makes clear what we understand by the declaration of Jesus—that even as the Father sent Jesus into the world, so now Jesus by the Holy Spirit is sending us. The event of salvation, of reconciliation, has been accomplished in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ but we by the power of the Holy Spirit are asked to implement this reconciliation.

Please let's not assess our spiritual lives for their entertainment quality. Let's not judge the quickened heart by the ability to maintain a mountaintop experience. Let's not require that our worship or our mission be relevant or exciting or driven by the combat of boredom. Rather let us understand that the mission we have accepted in our baptism (and that these baptizands accept today—Michael & Kinley, 8:30am; Margaret, Meade, & Anderson, 10:30am) is that of walking by the Spirit for the purpose of implementing the salvation Christ has won for the world. A composer writes a piece of music but the paper is silent until musicians bring it to life. A software program holds the solution to a myriad of information management problems but the user must learn its capability and implement the power of the program in order to realize the solutions. The watchmaker constructs a timepiece for precision and elegance. The owner must set it to the proper time and keep a power source applied to it. Let us rather assess the nature of our life together as the Body of Christ answering this question: are we implementing for the world, are we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, declaring for the world the Good News of God in Jesus Christ?

It may, at one point, be quite exciting. It may, at another, be deeply disturbing, challenging, painful, and even the occasion for suffering. But either way it is not likely to be simply entertaining. If anything I find that sometimes one must declare Good News over and over and over again before the import of the message is received. We seem so accustomed to the shock value of bad news and tragedy that Good News can tend simply roll off our backs like water over duck feathers.

The community, living by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of Gospel declaration, will be known by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fruit thereof. Are there those with the gift of preaching with wisdom? Are there those who teach by the Holy Spirit? Are there those with the gift of faith? Are there those with the gift of healing? Are there those who bear witness to the power of miracles, prophecy, and discerning of spirits? Are there those who speak in tongues and those who interpret? Each of these gifts is given to serve the Body and our purpose of Gospel declaration and implementation.

Each of these gifts as signs of the Holy Spirit come not as tools to entertain the Body or to combat boredom rather they serve as aids in bringing the Body to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Paul suggests in one list of the fruits of the Spirit that where the Spirit is received and honored there is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.

This Pentecost look with me for the ways that we are beginning to implement the saving work of Christ in our lives, in this community, and in the world. Let us spend our waking hours recognizing joy and peace and patience. Let us nurture individual and corporate gentleness and self-control in order we might be known as a Spirit-filled people indifferent to boredom and passionate for the Gospel.