

In the Name of the Living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Day of Pentecost.

During our formation period toward ordained ministry, we were challenged at one point by six great questions. In each succeeding year, we have pondered these six questions, getting into greater depth as we have gone into each new year. Now...on the Day of Pentecost...those questions bear repeating:

1. Who is God the Father? 2. Who is God the Son? 3. Who is God the Holy Spirit? 4. Who am I, individually, as a Christian 5. Who are we, in being gathered together as the Church? And finally...6. Who cares?

That's right...those are the six...ending with "who cares?" Which may sound a little too smug. Or irreverent. Or sarcastic. Well, in all seriousness...it may be the most relevant in our time and in this culture, if we actually consider it seriously. "Who cares?" makes us look inward. Causes us to personally and individually evaluate our personal spirituality. Causes us to ask the hard questions:

Why **do** I get dressed every Sunday morning, drive down here, and sit in this pew?

How really comfortable **am** I with what I hear, or sing, or say in church?

How much do I, in my heart of hearts, **really** believe...to the point that I try to live my life within it?

Now, each one of us is "in transition"...and I believe very, very strongly that God enjoys the dialogue around the personal issues of "who cares?" That it is very, very "OK" to ask the question, quietly and inwardly and daily...who cares?

If we are troubled in asking ourselves...in the silence of our own individual spiritual reflection...any of the questions within the "who cares" category, we have plenty and plenty of company. Look at Scripture...and I mean to look at it critically.

Is it not true that the twelve apostles of Jesus...throughout the entire time of his ministry...come across as basically clueless....at least until the day that we celebrate as the Day of Pentecost? Taken over the whole of his story, could Simon Peter have been any more human?

Better yet, is not it true that ALL of scripture is the gigantic story of "who cares?" There are many, many Christians who truly and devotedly believe that every single word in our Holy Scriptures is the literal word of God, as if written by some giant hand and pen out of the sky. But, is it not more accurate to consider that our scriptures are, on the whole, the wonderful, divinely-inspired story of the struggle of God's people over the centuries, wrestling with the great, personal questions of "who cares"? Just like us?

Today, we focus on the Day of Pentecost. Today, for me, is one of the greatest...absolutely greatest days in our church calendar...right up there with Christmas and Easter. And yet, I think, it is one of the least appreciated, one of the most ignored, and certainly one of the least understood events in scripture. Why?

As humans, we have natural sensate abilities that combine with intellect and reason, so it is natural for us to try to figure stuff out. And that has always been so. Even cavemen learned. GEICO made a huge insurance business nationwide as a result of the humor of cavemen being offended with the presumption that they cannot learn.

But, anyway, that is what we do. We try to figure stuff out, because we can...and that extends to our efforts to try to figure God out. But God is spirit that we cannot actually see or physically touch...and, as the species we are, we get frustrated with our inability to figure it out.

For many of us, that frustration to figure out God has resulted in **denial**...God does not exist. Or **disillusionment**...so I will go from church to church until I can find a church who can point Him out to me. Or **distance**...which goes both ways: (1) either God is in heaven "out there", way past Pluto and completely detached from real life. Maybe God will help if I beg enough times. Or (2) that **distance** can come from my end out of frustration....saying, in effect, "Don't call me, God. I'll call you".

All of that...and more...are really differing forms of estrangement, or separation between us and God. Separation from God. Sin. Broken-ness. Call it whatever you want. We cannot help but be that way.

But, then, of course, God presses his love. "I am who I am", says the Lord. All of creation...ALL of it...us included...all of it, over all time..then, now, and to come...all of creation is the seen and unseen evidence of God's love, and power, and presence. We just do not get it, because we tend to work at things alone, saying essentially, "Thanks, God, but just leave it to me. I will take care of it."

Still, God, in his love, sends Jesus to us. To show us the ways and means of life, here and now, as part of the experience of God's creation. In other words, the very essence and meaning of my life, and your life, is **not** goal oriented, is not getting to heaven. It is not even about getting to lunch today. The meaning of my life, and yours, is to experience it. To savor it along the way. To live it, which means...in the words of the gospel according to Nike...**just do it**.

Look at the Nicene Creed more closely after this sermon. "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life". The giver of life?

It is God the father who made me and made all who I love. Through the efforts of others, he made the car we are driving today, and the gas that went in it. But it is the Holy Spirit...who we undervalue, or forget, or ignore, that gives us life.

It is the Holy Spirit within me....and you...that brings us into the living. Not just existing. But living, in the here and now.

Calling us to engage our faith, and to live within the life that we are given.

Like the apostles at the Day of Pentecost, we are called to speak about God's **deeds of power**.

Deeds. The book is ACTS. This is about DOING life, not about being.

In my transition, I am far, far more aware now that it is the Holy Spirit that allows my heart to be touched in unique ways that call to me.

It is the Holy Spirit that has introduced me...through greater awareness, through more focused sensitivity...to the little and subtle events in my daily life as being visionary examples of insight, of ways in which the gospel stories of Jesus live on right in front of me today. The LIVING God.

I have said many times that I have come to experience the absolutely best moments of my week... standing around the altar, here at this parish at the high moment of communion. Watching dear, devoted souls coming to the rail....either coming to find, or having the sense of being again in the very presence of God. Hopefully, being fed with the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, you find the face of Christ in the persons around you.

I know that I have, and I have continued to feel nurtured here.

Who cares? Well, I do...within the power and grace that God gives to me.

And the Holy Spirit tells me, within the power that I have as a member of the body of Christ, and further authorized by the church to stand here and preach the gospels, to tell you that this place **is** blessed. And to offer to God the continuing prayer of thanksgiving that the dear people and souls of this place have had upon me.

The Holy Spirit brings us into the body of Christ, and now, let us leave it to God how to live into that. Joyfully. Abundantly. In the innumerable ways, throughout our individual lives, that we can rejoice within the presence of God as the Father, and as the Son, and...particularly today...as the Holy Spirit.

Amen.