

## Education of the Emotions

### ***Let not your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid. John 14:27***

Volcanic Ash Clouds impeding air travel. Oil gushing into the Ocean (Gulf) day after day with no real solutions or signs of it naturally abating. Financial instability within recent months. Political instability around the world. Soldiers, no longer marching but riding home on the Highway of Heros. Apocalyptic fervor resurging with the History Channel's 2012 "The End of Time". Our own reading today from the prophet Joel preached by Peter on Pentecost.

I will show wonders in the heavens above  
 And signs on the earth below,  
 Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;  
 The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,  
 Before the great and magnificent day.

And then, all the regular things that can make a heart grow weak, even among the young. And so we cry out "Will my anxiety ever abate? Can it be lowered? Can it be controlled? Could it at least be possibly managed?"

God's Word emboldens me to confidently proclaim "yes"! God is in control! God does not want your hearts to be troubled. God is not the author of confusion – Satan is. And Jesus points out as much in our Gospel reading referring to him by one of his titles: "Ruler of this World". He points out to his disciples "He is coming". Place the blame where it belongs. Do not sin by succumbing to the temptation to blame God.

Our command is to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul and all our mind (Mark 12:30). The entirety of our being is important. Yet, in times such as these, it's the heart which needs an education even more so than the mind or the body. In times when apocalyptic fervor threatens to consume us we are in need of strong hearts and the maturing of our emotions.

And so we have confidence in the one who promises "Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you". We may not know whether petitions for money will be "in the name" or "in the will of God" but we do have confidence that this petition, for strong hearts and courage in troubled times will be answered. For we have the promise read from the Gospel today, "Let not your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid (John 14:27)". Given the repetition of our Lord's encouraging Word in John 14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled" we know it to be his will for us all. The historic collect of the day isn't so much historic as relevant for all ages of this earth. It is a call for the Holy Spirit to instruct our hearts as much as our minds.

O God, on this day you taught the hearts of Your faithful people  
 By sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit.  
 Grant us in our day by the same Spirit  
 To have a right understanding in all things  
 And evermore rejoice in His holy consolation. ...

Now we might wisely wonder, how a troubled heart might be transformed into a trusting, faithful and courageous one.

On the Day of Pentecost, the answer came with a rushing wind "The Holy Spirit".

He is not quiet. He brings results. The confusion of languages that came with sin with the building of Babel, is reversed at Pentecost. Jews from all over: Parthians, Medes, Elamites which is roughly the territory of modern day Iran could understand each other's language. Mesopotamia, roughly today's Saudi Arabia, Libya likewise could do the same. Others from Rome and Egypt also could hear the wonders of God proclaimed in their own language.

It wasn't just Peter preaching, having the gift of languages. It was all the people present, speaking to one another, truly understanding one another. Imagine the dynamic of the crowd changing, multitudes of people in a confined area. Some are using a common but second language, each party equally struggling. One conversation stops. "Now what is that word in Hebrew?" Others, less proficient are reduced to the most basic of communication with gestures. Others are repeating the same incomprehensible phrase to another, raising his voice each time as if more volume will bring more understanding. We in Toronto know the scene probably better than in most areas of the country. But now, all those frustrations are taken away.

Such is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the message they are hearing and understanding is more important here. It's easy to get caught up with the miracle of the fire descending and the mechanics of languages translated. But what is more important is what they are listening to. (Acts 2:11) "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And the greatest work comes in the last verse of the Acts reading: "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved".

The mighty work is the work of salvation. It is the work that is described in Peter's sermon which immediately follows our reading from Acts today – Acts 2|:22-36. The central mighty work is the work of Christ on the cross. The cross remains central through both Old and New Testaments. For the cross is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices in Judaism. The cross appeases the justice required of by a Holy God - from the cross His death and burial; His triumph over the powers of hell with his descent to that place; His triumph over death with his resurrection; the promise that our physical bodies entering into glory through his Ascension; the certain realization of all of this when he comes to judge the living and the dead.

If there ever was to be an anxiety alleviator it would be this Gospel. In it we have peace. We have our consciences clear. We have the king of terrors licked. We have our future secure. Peter described at length how this anxiety alleviating Gospel belonged to all the saints whether Old Testament or New. Take David for example. I quote Acts 2:31, 32 “David saw what was ahead and said the Christ would rise again: He was not deserted when He was dead, and His body did not experience decay. God has raised this Jesus – we’re all witnesses of that”.

At the centre of the message are the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. You can be certain of that no matter which feast or festival we celebrate.

The message brings results. The message educates the heart as well as the mind and soul. The Gospel message brings the embodiment of the Gospel to us – Jesus Christ. The message of Pentecost is that “Although our Lord has ascended into heaven, God is closer than we think”. As one continues to read Acts chapter 2, Peter’s sermon leads to baptism. If there ever was to be an anxiety reliever it would be that we are baptized. You are sealed in the powerful name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are marked as His own and no one can snatch us out of the Father’s Hand. We have the king of terrors licked. We have our future secure. We have the king of terrors licked. We have our future secure.

Still Peter’s message continues with a window into the early worshipping community. Acts 2:42 “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers.

It is in the breaking of bread, here connected with teaching and fellowship that we know they celebrated the Lord’s Supper. And here my friends, is great cause for anxieties to be alleviated. For here we have the promise. “This is my body” “This is my blood”, the Real Presence. God Himself is Present.

Now Jesus ascended bodily into heaven. It is true. And we might be tempted to think that the fullness of his presence no longer dwells with us. But behold the promise in the “breaking of bread”. “This is my body”. We might be tempted to think in human spatial terms of our Lord travelling to the land far, far away. We are tempted to think that his seat “at the right hand of the Father” resides in a far away throne room.

But, although heaven, in a sense is far away, especially far away from sin and all the hosts of evil, we must remember that space and distances in space are merely human concerns. He is the Lord. And although he possesses human flesh he is not limited by that flesh.

The right hand of God is understood as “all authority”. In Canada, we call those with special authority “the right honourable”. Jesus sits at the “right hand of the Father” with all authority over heaven and earth. Therefore He has the authority to deliver exactly what He had promised – His body and blood given for you and me to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins and resulting comfort of His abiding Real Presence.

Let not your hearts be troubled. God Himself is Present with the coming of the Holy Spirit. This is God's hope for all people. We can ask for this gift with confidence. The Holy Spirit is there, empowering the Gospel Message as it is proclaimed to all peoples. It is a Gospel incarnate in Christ who comes in both Baptism and Lord's Supper.

As we proceed to the altar rail today, may we find such comfort there. May our hearts become strong. God Himself is Present.

Amen.