

May 24, 2015 Lay Led Worship (Pentecost Sunday - C)

Acts 2:4 (Portion of 2nd Lesson)

By Pastor Wayne Halldorson

*We can do the **Impossible**, when we're:*

- Spirit FILLED
- Spirit ENABLED

Scripture mentions a number of times how the disciples of Jesus fought with each other. They argued over who among them was the greatest, and who deserved the places of honour in his kingdom. And they were mostly uneducated people; some fishermen – like Peter, his brother Andrew, James and John – the sons of Zebedee, there was Matthew, the once hated tax collector, and Simon the political zealot. It was sort of a strange mix.

Scripture also mentions some times when they didn't seem too sharp. **Matthew 16:5-12** is one of those places:

When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. 6 “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

7 They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn't bring any bread.”

8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? 9 Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 11 How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Ignorance is one thing, but the time came when they all fled and deserted him. They denied him. Peter called down curses on himself swearing that he didn't know this fellow by the name of Jesus.

These disciples were his **CHOSEN INSTRUMENTS**. God intentionally tells us about their imperfections and weaknesses because we need to know: the Christian Church did NOT take off across the world because of these brilliant, dedicated, inspiring followers that Jesus picked.

- Without the Holy Spirit: No one would listen to them, or pay any attention to what they said.
- Without the Holy Spirit: nothing would have become of Christianity, and the saving Gospel message would have never come down to us.
- Without the Holy Spirit: the task Christ had given the disciples would have indeed been IMPOSSIBLE.

WITH the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, whom Jesus promised to send them, the Truth of redemption – that saving message that brings with it the power of God to

convert the unbelieving heart has gone out to all nations. People have been saved for eternal life with God; lots of them. People are still being saved, and God's people are still doing the impossible.

Our text gives us an example of what the Holy Spirit can do. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit **filled** these **Chosen Instruments** of God, and **Equipped** them to do the **impossible**. Our text is one verse from our 2nd lesson; the account of Pentecost from **Acts 2** – we'll focus on **verse 4**

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Filled with the Spirit; Enabled to do the impossible. They could instantly; without the drudgery, toil and practice it takes to learn another language – they could instantly speak in foreign tongues. People from nations all around the ancient world, who were in Jerusalem for a special festival (God's incredible timing) heard these guys proclaiming what God had done in their own native languages.

This was, primarily, a **SIGN** for people: **Something supernatural is going on here, better check this out!** And when they did, they heard about how the Christ had come, his name was Jesus, he was crucified for the sins of the world, he rose from the dead, and calls all people to repent and believe in him for eternal life. As miracles always do, they direct people to that objective Truth that God wants the world to hear and believe.

Unfortunately, **UNBELIEF** will always look at what God does, and see it totally incorrectly. People accused the disciples of being drunk – they were loudly and boldly proclaiming the Gospel; in a bunch of different languages – this couldn't be something supernatural and divine, there must be some other logical explanation.

Those without faith will fight against what God does and says. They will say “NO” to Jesus, and those who proclaim his word – NO! this book will not judge my actions! NO, I make my own decisions, and I decide what is right! NO, this just can't be right!

Consider the Apostle Paul and his background as Saul. He actually **HAD** the training in theology, he knew the Scriptures, and was looking for the Messiah to come – but when it came to Jesus – NO, it just couldn't be him! Wipe his followers off the face of the earth, this movement could be dangerous to our authority. NO! – until Jesus himself appeared on the road to Damascus.

Well – the unbelieving **OLD ADAM**, the sinful nature within us, still manages to fight against God and say NO! to him. We push against God when we think/act/live with the old sinful nature in the driver's seat. When we say:

- NO! Lord, my way is better than your way. I really need this, so I should have it.
- NO – I can't make it this week; I don't have time for Bible Study, I can't help out or get involved right now, I just can't.
- NO Lord, you can't lead. Life is about me, and what I want. You come through for me when I need you, but I'm in the driver's seat here.

It's like he's ready to wrap his arms around us, and *we (when we let our sinful nature's control us – and too often we do) we have a hand out – to stop him.*

WHY?? He only wants what's best for us! **Let him in.** The Holy Spirit wants to fill your heart – LET HIM; let him fill you! The **repentant heart** says: “OK, you're right, I'm sorry, I have been pushing you away, and pushing you out of the driver's seat.”

God the Holy Spirit fills the repentant heart, and when he does, he drives out sin, and fear, and doubt. He drives out sinful attitudes and worldly perspectives, he drives out guilt and self-loathing.

As he drives that out of us, he fills us with godly joy, peace, and zeal to serve him and live for him. It's amazing – and it's OK to put the arm down and let him fill you, he wants the best for you, he wants to speak to your heart and soul through the words of Scripture.

Permit me a moment to read a few words about the Holy Spirit's amazing tool that we know as the Holy Bible: From the book of PSALMS:

I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Your servant will meditate on your decrees.

Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors. (*Psalm 119:14,16,18,23-24*)

The Spirit works through his Holy Word, and the Spirit can do amazing and incredible things – he enables God's people to do the IMPOSSIBLE. We see that on Pentecost when the disciples were **enabled** to do such incredible things, and speak the Gospel so boldly and clearly.

We might look at the tools God has given us, and think they're kind of bland – when compared to what he did for the Apostles. We have the hammer, screwdriver, the tape measure – they got the air hammers and state of the art power tools. They needed those signs and wonders, so God gave it to them. God also knew what a mess it would be if Christians down through the ages had those powerful tools – it would be all about the TOOLS and not about the task God has given – **to get the Gospel out!**

We're doing the same job they did, here – today, and we dare not scorn the gifts God has given us by his Holy Spirit. God has ENABLED us to do the IMPOSSIBLE. May we never forget how incredible that truly is; we have his unlimited power at our fingertips, and we can do amazing things when the Holy Spirit fills us and enables us to do them.

- We can overcome **SIN!** It is not your master; it does not rule in your life –like it does for the unbelieving world.
- We can have **peace and joy** – even in the worst of times. We can have that because the Holy Spirit has given us something that nothing in life can separate us from: *the Gospel.*

- We can **cheat death.** It's not the end for us, our bodies will not stay dead forever, we have a glorious future with our Lord in heaven.
- We can **witness our faith.** We can fulfill God's plan for us being here in this world. Many people, including many among us, might have said those common words: “I just can't share my faith with people! I don't know what to say. I'm afraid I would mess it up.” You know who Jesus is and what He has done. You can tell people about Him in your own words as the opportunity arises. All of you can, in your own way, with the tools God has given you . . . you can. Try it; practice it.
- We can **build an amazing church** – right here; Divine Word. We can do it.

Henry Ford once came up with a revolutionary plan for a new kind of engine, which we know today as the V-8. He had some men draw up the plans, and presented them to the engineers. As the engineers studied the drawings, one by one they came to the same conclusion. Ford just didn't know much about the fundamental principles of engineering. He'd have to be told gently--his dream was impossible. Ford said, "Produce it anyway." They replied, "But it's impossible." "Go ahead," Ford commanded, "and stay on the job until you succeed, no matter how much time is required." For six months they struggled with drawing after drawing, design after design. Nothing. Another six months. Nothing. At the end of the year Ford checked with his engineers and they once again told him that what he wanted was impossible. He told them to keep going. They did. And they discovered how to build a V-8 engine.

He believed in that dream – and he had no certainty it would ever happen. Certainly **we** can have faith in our dream to have an amazing church that is a powerful witness for Christ, when we have God's unlimited resources in our corner and at our disposal.

One might say: “No way, it's impossible. This church is not capable of much – we don't have much money, we don't have many members, we don't have enough talent, we squabble over little things. We have a theology that's out of sync with the world around us, people are too busy, people don't make enough and give enough to support the church – you can never compete with the big and flashy churches that have learned to give people what they want.”

One could have said things like that about the disciples too, God continues to prove **THAT ONE wrong.** **WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT filling us** through his Word, he's ENABLING us to do the impossible, just like the Apostles. He's given **us** the tools we need. Put Him to the test – look for ways to get more involved with the mission of Divine Word. You can ask pastor how you can serve, or speak to one of our elders or council members – we **WILL** do what is humanly impossible to accomplish, when the Holy Spirit is the one filling us and enabling us to carry out God's plans.