

5.20.18

“What Does All This Mean?”

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Acts 2:1-12

It is a common phrase in today's world. “I am spiritual but not religious.” It is estimated that twenty percent of American people identify themselves with some sort of similar expression. The statement is a revealing one for its dislike for the life of religious communities, but also for its reduction of “spirituality” to a personality trait. To say “I” am “spiritual” sounds like saying “I” am patient or thoughtful or generous. The Spirit works in our individual lives, but it is much bigger than just about “me.” What is this amazing, scary, and powerful experience we call the Spirit?

It is said the Spirit will “blow where it will.” It acts in ways that are unpredictable and surprising. The Spirit drove Jesus and can drive us into the wilderness. The Spirit, we are told in scripture, can fill us with righteous anger and cause us to speak in languages we do not understand. The Spirit can frustrate us by working through people who we think are not good enough or don't qualify.

We are also told the Spirit is, at the same time, perfectly reliable and consistent. Jesus promised the Spirit would come not only to shake us up but to comfort us, teach us, counsel us, and help us remember. The Spirit reassures us that Christ's grace and love is always present, even when we do not think so. The Spirit helps us pray when we cannot pray and intercedes for us when we have no words. The Spirit is bigger and stronger than we can imagine and we cannot control it.

So the next time someone tells you about the presence of God that is not easily explained, listen to them for signs of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control). The next time you witness a sign and wonder from God in the form of the unexpected presence of grace or joy or love or hope or peace, take note because the Spirit is alive and working in your life and the lives of those around you. If you see guilt or anger or hate or fear or despair, take note because that is not the work of the Spirit.

Sunday is the celebration of Pentecost. We celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not to be more “spiritual,” but to open ourselves to all the amazing, scary, wonderful, comforting things the Spirit can do in our lives and in the life of our community of faith. Pentecost calls us to ask what would we do if we were not afraid? What would we do if we did not carry around the burden of guilt? What would we do if hate and anger were removed from our souls? What would we do if we let go of despair?

Think about it – Pray about it – Live it

*Bob*