

Title: “Strength Training”

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Acts 2:1-4

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Service Readings: Ezek. 37:1-14; Acts 2:1-21; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

When the Holy Spirit entered into you on your baptism, there was probably no violent wind and the only tongues of fire to be found were atop the altar and baptismal candles. But the lack of those outwardly signs doesn't make the event any less powerful or miraculous. On that day, you too were radically transformed. How does your life reflect this event?

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

A sound like violent wind; tongues like fire. This is how the Holy Spirit made its entrance. No one in the room would have missed it; no one would have dismissed it for a typical, natural event. Not in the least. God the Spirit had entered and God the Spirit had made his presence known.

And just as unnatural his entrance, so was the disciples' responses. Miraculous speaking, boldness in proclamation, fearlessness in stance. These simple young men became the mouthpiece for the very God of all creation, and a mouthpiece they became! Peter so skillfully connects the prophecies of Joel to the life and work of Jesus Christ. We heard the first portion of his speech this morning but if we were to continue reading he would see how he masterfully accomplishes this connection. How can a simple man, apart from the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit, articulate this truth so elegantly? Clearly, the Spirit of God had been sent, and clearly the power of the Spirit was on display.

Who could deny the radical transformation of these disciples by the Holy Spirit? No longer were these men who feared the consequences of the world. Instead, they were men who lived only to proclaim the good news of Jesus the Christ.

The work of the Holy Spirit was powerful that day: visible and invisible in so many ways. And yet, when Peter stands before the crowds to explain what they are witnessing, he doesn't credit the Holy Spirit. He barely even speaks about him, and does so only later in his speech. Instead, he immediately begins the work that that Holy Spirit has empowered him to do: he speaks of Jesus. He speaks of his death and his resurrection. And he speaks of the salvation that has been made available because of this work. *Jesus* is what Peter preaches. *Jesus* is who Peter points to. Not the Holy Spirit. Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the deliverer of Peter's faith, this much is true. But the faith that he delivers is the person and work of Jesus Christ. And Peter draws strength from this faith that has been delivered by the Holy Spirit. Enough so that he can break free from the security of his room

and testify to the truth about Jesus. And this faith is strong enough that it will sustain him throughout the rest of his life. He will be able to endure persecution and suffering *because* of his faith – a faith that is formed, strengthened, and replenished by the Holy Spirit. But his faith, and the strength of his faith, is not a means to an end. Instead, it is fuel to serve his true mission, his *true end* – to proclaim to the world the death and resurrection of Jesus.

What about you? When the Holy Spirit entered into you on your baptism, there was probably no violent wind and the only tongues of fire to be found were atop the altar and baptismal candles. But the lack of those outwardly signs doesn't make the event any less powerful or miraculous. On that day, you too were radically transformed. Your old self didn't survive; it was put to death and a new life was raised up – a life hidden in Jesus. And through this new life you became an heir to the promised treasures of God: a life bodily resurrected and lived eternally in the presence of God. On that day the work of the Holy Spirit was powerful: visible and invisible. There may not have been wind and fire, but there was the Word, and the almighty transformational power that comes with it.

But after that event what did your life look like? What does it look like today? You have been completely transformed! You have been given new life! You have been adopted into God's family. You have been given a faith that enables you to believe all of this! What are you doing with it? Do the people in your life, your family, your workplace *even know* that you are a Christian by your words and by your actions? This is a difficult question for each one of us to answer, even me. None of us are perfect and none of us live a life that constantly fulfills Jesus' commission. But it is in *that* realization, that acknowledgment, that we then turn to our faith and draw upon it for strength and comfort. We reach into the well of faith to remind us that we are chosen, loved, and forgiven sons and daughters of God, and that the judgement for our failures, our sins, has already been settled by the death and resurrection of our brother, Jesus.

Long ago, the Holy Spirit made his entrance in that room with thunderous display. And in that day he emboldened the faith of these disciples and transformed them from people who feared speaking of Jesus to people who lived only to proclaim the good news of him. We have been given this same helper, and with him came the same transforming faith. What the disciples were given, we were given, too.

May the transformation that took place in our baptism continue to fortify our faith so that our lives, too continue to be transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. May our lives be lives lived to the praise of him who suffered and died for us and may we reflect the sacrificial life of Jesus through our service and love towards others. We have been given gifts of talents and treasures; And we have been given the Holy Spirit. We have all we need to be a bright light in this dark world and attract others to our Lord and savior.

May your light ever shine bright and may your faith ever remain strong. In Jesus' name. Amen.