



Pentecost offers us three important insights for our church today. In Acts we see the Spirit gives power to proclaim the truth – people might think you are out of your mind in the process – and it creates a fresh new way to experience the old, old story of God’s love and grace.

The Holy Spirit so filled Peter with power that he gives the first sermon which converts thousands of people! Peter’s voice has been an example to all the faithful for ages. For me, my parents have also modeled this voice.

On the wall in my office are pictures of my mother, father, and grandfather. Those pictures remind me of the legacy they have established in preaching the truth with boldness, grace, and love.

I remember very clearly even now when I was only five years old standing near my mother’s office at Broadway Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. I remember there were men and women who didn't believe in women ministers (this was the 1970s) and without being combative she simply continued praying and preaching, winning them over not with arguments but the clear call she had from God that over time became evident to all but the most intractable of members.

I remember the different kinds of people that walked in her office door, and I also

remember being very annoyed at having to wait for who knows how many hours on Sunday afternoon as my mother patiently and lovingly help them, whatever the problem was that they had. The people who came through that door as I look back now were well-dressed businessmen, captains of industry in New York. They were homeless people who slept on the stairs of the church. They were young and old, men and women, black and white. They were people who needed help and my mother did whatever she could. This was my first glimpse of Pentecostal power.

And to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to seem to be out of your mind. The book of Acts tells us the people didn't know what to make of all these different languages being spoken so they assumed they were intoxicated. It was simply too out of the ordinary. This is where my father enters the picture.

A few years ago, I was meeting with a congregation through my work in the Presbytery in Alabama when the church musician told me that he knew my father. This was quite a surprise to me; I had not encountered many that knew him. He said my father was his religion teacher at Westminster choir College. This particular student was apt to not show up to class very often and apparently one day while he was sleeping out last night’s party, he heard a knock on his door. It was my

father and the entire religion class! They piled into his dorm room and my father proceeded to give the lecture for the day! The man then told me, "It was that kind of care and attention from your father that saved my life."

The Spirit gives us courage to do crazy things. Crazy enough to invest in a man's dream to create an academy of learning in Liberia, where there was nothing; no education, no school, now young boys and girls are thriving in wonderful classrooms. God gave Sam Enders a crazy vision; a God-sized vision and thank God through the power of the Holy Spirit you all listened and stepped up! They opened in 2012 with 140 children and now they have 1,000!!! That's Pentecostal power!!!

Sometimes we need to be out of our practical mind and to be in a Holy Spirit fervor.

Which brings us music.

Jazz is a fusion that can take a traditional tune, keep what is best and offer a new interpretation for the moment in which we live.

One of my all-time favorite hymns is *Be Thou My Vision*. Every time I hear it or sing it, it stirs something eternal, something deeply spiritual, something joyous and peaceful. But for my daughter, Liz, it was just another boring church song to sit through on Sunday morning.

I will still never forget it was almost 30 years ago now when my daughter, Liz, was sitting next to me in the Seminary Chapel at Princeton. I was visiting from my congregation in Arkansas. She was four at the time. Normally she would sit very still during the hymns. But this was a jazz service. And when they played *Be thou My Vision* suddenly she was swaying in the

pews like she had been moving to music all her life. It was easy to recognize the melody but the fresh perspective they gave injected it with imbued it with new purpose and meaning. And so, I felt it as well. I felt the Spirit moving in me, as I saw it move in Liz. The beautiful message of that most ancient and amazing and wonderful hymn spoke to me in a way it never had before.

This is the heart of Pentecost and the heart of our challenge as a church today. More and more people are becoming "nones", that means they have no church affiliation whatsoever.

How do we take the essence of God's good news for the hungry in body, mind, and spirit and let the Spirit's wind blow down that which holds us back?

How we fan the flames of love for children in distress?

How do we stoke the fires of grace for those in NYC yet to discover the mercy of our Lord?

We grasp with all our might, the essence of God's goodness and let the Spirit burn up the rest as chaff to the flame so that all we are left with is pure Pentecostal power.

And we must do so with the determination to make the ministry of our Lord with the same passion-filled commitment as scribbled on the wall of a New York subway!

*You can punch my lips so I can't blow my horn, but my fingers will find a piano.*

*You can slam the piano lid on my fingers, but you can't stop my toes from tapping.*

*You can stomp on my foot to keep my toes from tapping, but my heart will keep on swinging in four/four time.*

*You can even stop my heart from ticking, but the music of the saints shall never cease.*

Amen.