

God's Paradigm Shift Acts 2:14-26

Our worship service began with the baptism of an infant. During this part of the service, we were invited to remember and renew our own baptism vows and be thankful that God has been a part of our lives. A look back into our childhood reveals a different lifestyle from which we are currently living. Simple things like the old rotary phones have come close to extinction. Even land lines are disappearing as cell phones become more popular. I wonder what kind of world little Tanner will live in as an adult. What will he remember as he reflects back on his childhood and youth life?

There are many changes happening in our world causing us to experience growing pains as we are transformed into a new life. This transitional time is referred to as a paradigm shift. It alters not only how we live, but also how we think which impacts the type of moral values we deem important. For example, how has text messages altered the way we communicate with each other? How does our wardrobe reflect others perspective of us in a job interview? These are not new concepts. Throughout history, we have studied how material inventions, like the automobile restructured the means of transportation, have changed the

way we live in the world. Evolution is a wonderful thing, unless you live in the midst of the restructuring period. The key to surviving such transformation is focusing on the results of the changes that are occurring.

In the passage today, we read about the paradigm shift created with Christ's death and resurrection. The tragedy of this event gave birth to a restructure of religious beliefs in which we are still experiencing its residue today. In the Christian year, this transformation is known as Pentecost. We enter the biblical scene with Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast day of Shavuot. The Shavuot is a commemoration of the day God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. This celebration reunited the Jews with the laws of God that distinguished them as God's chosen people.

It has only been fifty days since they gathered for their last celebration of Passover. Amongst the Jews were at least 120 followers of Jesus, eleven of which were the disciples of Jesus. The mere sight of these men raised the anxiety level for the Jews. It wasn't long after the disciples appearance until the people heard what sounded like a violent wind approaching. They watched as a light that looked like tongues of fire touched the Disciples. Suddenly everyone stopped as though they had been frozen with fear. They heard the voice of the disciples speaking in

various languages only there was no interpreter translating. Everyone within hearing distance could understand every word they spoke in their own native tongue. Peter delivered a sermon so powerful that three thousand men felt God transform their lives. What did Peter say that shifted the world's thought and action?

First, Peter explained how the Prophet Joel's words had come true. What they had just experienced was God's Holy Spirit descending upon them. The sound of the wind and the image that caused them to think of fire was the Holy Spirit coming to empower God's people. God had touched those who would continue to preach, teach, and prophecy to the world. We are still experiencing this ripple today as we hear others share their faith story. I would not be standing before you today if it were not for God's Holy Spirit. The reaffirmation of our baptism this morning was also the touch of God's Holy Spirit empowering you. The promise we made to Jim, Sara, and Tanner is another part of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

Peter's second sermon point was the understanding that Jesus truly was the Messiah. He recalled the miraculous events that Jesus performed were more than magic or mystical performances. Jesus was using his

divine power to prove that he was the one sent by God to lead God's people into a new world. The world Jesus spoke of was the future of eternal life with God. Jesus always kept the focus of his stories and miracles beyond the limitations of the human mind. Jesus took us face to face with God.

The third point of Peter's message was specifically addressed to the Jews who were present at the Passover events. Many of them standing before Peter were part of the crowd that cried, "Crucify Him" as Jesus stood before them with Pilate. He recalled how their vote led them to believe they killed Jesus. Death to them was final. The only thing that remained was the body and bones which were left to decay returning them to dust. The concept of life beyond death was foreign to Jews and Gentiles in this era. The reason the Jews wanted Jesus dead was to put a physical and spiritual end to Jesus' life. Resurrection of any kind was not in their vocabulary. Now, Peter clearly stated that Jesus has once again proven He truly is (notice the present tense) the Messiah. Jesus was alive.

Peter was not prophesying what would happen in the future. He was sharing his personal experience of physically seeing and touching Jesus. He knew for a fact that Jesus was not dead. Peter demonstrated how

Jesus had transformed his life. There were no more doubts. Peter was a true believer of God's power. He was standing before the Jews preaching, "Christ is alive" to the very people who put Jesus on the cross. His words were sincere. He told others how faith in God does not stop when death arrives but promises eternal life in heaven. Remember, Peter has also witnessed seeing Moses and Elijah long after their deaths. Peter's heart, mind, and soul transitioned from being silenced by fear into being empowered by the Holy Spirit to share his passion about God.

For the first time, Peter found the courage to publicly share his personal faith story. His heart was filled with strength and passion from God. What Peter didn't realize was his passion for God was contagious. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter's words touched the souls of others listening in the crowd. What they had encountered was so powerful they came in droves ready to follow Peter's instruction to repent and be baptized. They knelt before Peter and the other disciples, sharing with God their confessions, opening their hearts for God to cleanse their souls, and publically proclaiming God's activeness in their lives. The newly baptized people left sharing their story, preaching, teaching, and being God's

disciples in the world. At least three thousand souls were transformed with hearts filled with passion for God.

The transformation of hearts, minds, and souls is still active today. We have just witnessed the passion of one couple acknowledging God's active protection surrounding their son. This one event has also opened our hearts to receiving the touch of God's Holy Spirit as we renewed our own baptismal vows. Now our passion for God fills the room. There is excitement in the air as to who will be the next person to share his/her story of God. As United Methodists, our mission is to make disciples for the transformation of the world. The creation of disciples begins with the touch of God's Holy Spirit. Through God's gift of the Holy Spirit passion is about to burst forth creating another paradigm shift for God. Do you have a passion for God? If not, it is time to catch the Spirit. Amen.