

**“Energized by God’s Spirit”**  
**Acts 2:1-4, 1 Corinthians 12:4-13, John 7:37-39a**  
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**Introduction**

Today we celebrate Mother’s Day. The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before. The woman existed, but the mother, never. A mother is something absolutely new. It has been said, that making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body. With every birth two new lives are born—a baby, who is wholly without worries, and a mother, who will never again be without worry.

But today we also celebrate something else. After 7 Sundays of scripture and messages on the meaning of the resurrection, 50 days after Easter, we are ready for the next step. So the second of our celebrations for today is our celebration of God’s gift of his Spirit to the church. The celebration known as Pentecost. 50 days after Easter. The birthday of the church. The birthday of the church also known as Whitsunday, the day of the gift of God’s wisdom and wit and Spirit to the church.

God’s Spirit is presented to us in today’s scripture in three metaphorical ways: wind, fire, and water. We have seen evidence in the news this very week of the inability of humankind to predict or control wind, fire, and water. Tornadoes, wildfires, and a cyclone which may have claimed 100,000 lives this week. God was not in these tornadoes, wildfires, or the cyclone. But God is in Church. In the church as God’s Spirit.

Why does the fire of God’s Spirit burn more brightly in an assembly than in an individual? There is the demonstration we do for the first year Boy Scouts. We line them up in two lines facing each other. The first line is told whatever they do, to not smile. And the second line is told to smile as big as they can. Try as they might, the first line cannot keep from reflecting the smiles of the second line. None of them can refrain from smiling at someone smiling at them. And who can resist a mother’s smile? Human beings cannot help it. We all tend to emulate others. When we hear our mothers sing, we sing. When we hear our mothers pray, we pray. When we see our mothers listening, we listen. When we see our mothers in a particular body of Christ lift God up as being worthy, we do the same. When see our mothers lift God up in song and prayer, we do the same. And when we lift up God as the most important priority in our lives, we benefit both individually and as a group.

As John the Baptizer anticipates the coming of Jesus, Jesus anticipates the coming of God’s Spirit. As John the Baptizer cries out in the wilderness, so Jesus cries out in Jerusalem.

**Movement 1 – Jesus cries out**

A schoolmaster in France was discouraged with one of his students. He wrote in his roll book concerning this student: "He is the smallest, the meekest, the most unpromising boy in my class." Half a century later, an election was held in France to select the greatest Frenchman. By popular vote, that meekest, smallest, most unpromising boy was chosen. His name? Louis Pasteur, the founder of modern medicine. At age seventy-three, a national holiday was declared in his honor. He was too old and weak to attend the ceremony in Paris, so he sent a message to be read by his son. The message read: "The future belongs not to the conquerors but to the saviors of the world."

Louis Pasteur was driven by a great purpose. Our names will never be household words like Pasteur's, but we, too, can be driven by a great purpose. God's Spirit can give us that purpose.

You and I get our news from television, public radio, the Tennessean, USA Today, and the internet. Because we can multitask while listening to the radio, and because the internet is replacing television as the new screen time, some predict that television and the newspaper as sources of news will die out. Die out like the town crier.

Not too long ago, the town crier was the one who delivered the news. In medieval England, town criers were the chief means of news communication since many could not read or write. The town criers were the ones with the loudest voices. They were employed by the town mayor to deliver important news.

Just as God's Spirit descends dramatically on the Jerusalem church after 50 days, that is, 7 Sundays after Jesus' resurrection, so after 7 days of the Jewish festival of the tabernacles, Jesus stands and cries out. Jesus doesn't speak softly. He cries out. He has a message from God and he will be heard. Like John the Baptizer proclaims Jesus, Jesus proclaims God's Spirit.

## **Movement 2 – We thirst for liberation and forgiveness**

You and I both do that which we ought not to do, and we do not do that which we ought to do. We know that, and we feel ashamed. Doing that which we ought not to do, and not doing that which we ought to do, is part of the human condition.

Yes, before we trust in the good news of the Gospels, we suffer from shame. And we are thirsty for communion and connection with God. We long to tap into the deep waters of God's Spirit. God's powerful and active Spirit. We long for liberation from shame. We long for forgiveness. We long for meaning in life. But we are looking for liberation, for forgiveness, in all the wrong places. Yes, we are looking for love in all the wrong places. Until we tap into God's Spirit shown to us by Jesus.

Jesus cries out, "If anyone suffers from thirst for the meaning of life, let him come to me. Let him come to me and drink, and he will never suffer from that thirst again." God came to earth, wrapped himself in human flesh, and showed us that we need not feel shame.

Because there is nothing we can do that will separate us from the love of God. Because Jesus is our peace. Jesus, the light of the world, Jesus, that illuminating flash of light. Who reconciled us to God 2000 years ago.

The Greek word **πιστευ** is not just the English word “believe,” as it is frequently translated into English, but means much more. The Greek/English lexicon says it means to entrust oneself to someone with complete confidence. Whenever you read the word “believe” or “belief” in the KJV, the NIV, or the NRSV, remember this is not a full translation. A full translation of **πιστευ** is, to entrust oneself to someone with complete confidence.

Dr Renita Weems gave a lecture on burnout to the pastors in Nashville. She was one of my teachers at Vanderbilt Divinity School, a very bright African American woman. At the end of her talk on pastor burn out, a man stood up at the back of the room and asked her a question. He himself looked like Santa Claus, and like my childhood image of God our creator, sitting on a throne on a cloud. He asked the speaker, “Dr Weems, what does God look like?” To which she replied while smiling and stroking her chin, “I am not sure, but I think she is black!”

I no longer perceive God as a humanized man, but as having properties of both male and female. Though if we were to ever give a gender assignment to God’s Spirit, I would have to vote for that of a mother. A mother who gives unconditional love to her children. A mother who feeds us and changes our dirty diapers. A mother who always has a word of encouragement. A mother whose work is never done. God’s Spirit, which mothers us.

Tiring work, that of a mother. Tiring work, that of a companion in Christ. Like a car needs fuel to keep on running, so do we. We are looking for a filling station for our souls.

### **Movement 3 – We tap into God’s Spirit**

A church is that filling station for which we have been looking.

Cultural anthropologists tell us that certain species are social creatures. These social creatures live in colonies, not as hermits. Ants, bees, and yes, human beings, are among those creatures who live in colonies.

Paul tells the Corinthians in his letter to them that human beings are like those colonies of ants and bees. That when we care for each other, when we teach each other, and when we fellowship with each other, the fire of God’s Spirit burns more brightly.

We are not free floating spirits. We have bodies. Human bodies who like ants and bees are specialized with certain gifts. Gifts of God’s Spirit. Individualized gifts like knowledge, wisdom, and faith. Individualized gifts like reading scripture in public, teaching, and musical talent. Individualized gifts like greeting people at the door, making phone calls, and writing cards. Individualized gifts like discernment, caring for others, and preparing food for potlucks and coffee time. All of these gifts are activated by the

one and same Spirit of God. Who allots gifts to each one individually. For though the particular body of Christ is one, it has many members. And the members of the body, though many, are one body. For we are all baptized into one body, and we all drink of the same Spirit, symbolically in the Lord's Supper.

Jesus says, "Out of the hearts of those who have **πιστευ** or complete trust in me, shall flow rivers of the water of life," that is, Jesus says, "God's Spirit will flow out of those who trust in me." Jesus is not talking about just any water. Jesus is talking about a specific kind of water. The Greek word for this kind of water is **ζωη**. **ζωη**, from which comes the English word zoology. Out of those who trust in me, shall flow rivers of abundant life in communion with God. The one who trusts in Jesus not only has his own thirst quenched, but as the moon reflects the light of the sun, he is able on a dark night to reflect the light of Jesus and illuminate the paths of others. As a disciple, he is able, with God's help, to quench the thirst of others.

Many of you are mothers. You know what it is like to be tired. It falls upon you to get up in the middle of the night to feed, burp, and change the baby. From whence comes a mother's energy? May I suggest, from God. From the very Spirit of God. We tap into that energy with prayer, worship, and Bible study. And we also receive, from God's Spirit, our energy for using our gifts in the church. We tap into that energy with prayer, worship, and Bible study. We are inspired and energized by God through prayer, worship, and Bible study.

Inspired and energized by God's Spirit, we tap into God's Spirit. And we put on our crash helmets and strap ourselves in. There is no telling where God's Spirit will take us. Circling back around to the wind, fire, and water metaphors for God's Spirit. Like tornadoes, wildfires, and cyclones, we can neither predict nor control God's Spirit.

### **Conclusion**

Mother's Day is a birthday celebration.

With Easter arriving so early this year, Pentecost Sunday and Mother's Day Sunday fall on the same day. And we can't think of two institutions more alike than the Church and Mothers. We carry with us the spirit of our Mother's church throughout our lives. It pursues us, woos us, and reminds us of God's love for us.

This morning we celebrate two birthdays: the birthdays of two new creations that issue from the flowing waters of new life. The birthday of motherhood, and the birthday of the church.

Glory be to God, hallelujah, and all God's children say ....