

TUESDAY 31 May 2022 "Waiting?" (Acts 2:1-12)

Good morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

I start today with a question. **How do you handle WAITING?** Waiting on hold with a phone call? Waiting for an answer to an important question? Waiting in a long line? Waiting for some promised finances? Waiting for delivery of something you've ordered? Waiting for resolution to a problem?

Yesterday I left you in Jerusalem, with a group of people who all had two things in common: First, they were all friends of Jesus. Second, they were all in a quandary about life as they contemplated the reality that Jesus had left them and returned to heaven. That had happened about 10 days ago, and since then these people had been WAITING together. As they waited, they talked about their relationships and experiences with Jesus. *They were praying, thinking and trying to figure out how to live the rest of their lives profoundly impacted by Jesus, but now Jesus was gone!*

At a meal together, a short while before Jesus left them, He had told His disciples **"Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about... In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."** (Acts 1:4,5) And so here they are, still together in Jerusalem waiting. For what, they really weren't sure. *They knew this "gift" Jesus spoke of was the Holy Spirit of God, but how they would recognize when He came or what would happen upon His arrival, they did not know.* So... they waited and talked, and prayed, and had meals together and waited.

May I ask the question again... of all of us? How are you at waiting? Especially when you are not exactly sure what you are waiting for? *How long does it take for your frustration to start rising when your expectations are not being met and you think God should be doing something, but nothing seems to be happening?* I think that is exactly where these friends of Jesus were... after only a few days, but 10 days is a long time to sit and wait, isn't it?

The very last thing Luke records for us that Jesus had said to His friends is **"...and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."** (Acts 1:8) But that was 10 days ago, and still they waited. Yesterday we saw that Peter got impatient and led an election of sorts and Matthias was chosen to join the apostles as an appointed replacement for Judas. And still they waited. *As they waited, Jerusalem was filling with people... thousands and thousands of people.* The great Jewish festival called "**Pentecost**" was 50 days after Passover. People came from far and wide to be in Jerusalem for this festival, as they had come for Passover.

I wonder if some of Jesus' friends found themselves getting really impatient as the crowds came, perhaps even feeling Jesus may have forgotten about them and His promise to send the Holy Spirit?

The record simply says: **"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting..."** (Acts 2:1) These were all Jewish people. I presume the dramatic experience of a strong wind shaking the house would have brought to their minds great stories of their ancestors. Like the stories of when God used a great wind to blow away the billions of locusts who had come into Egypt (Exodus 10:19); or when God used a powerful wind to open the Red Sea for the fleeing Hebrew slaves (Exodus 14:21); or when God used a great wind to tear apart Mount Horeb when the prophet Elijah hid in a cave. (1 Kings 19:11)

But Dr. Luke reports there was more than a strong wind that Pentecost day: **"...They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them."** (Acts 2:2) Again for these Jews, the sight of fire coming down into their house yet not burning the roof of the house and even sitting on their heads would have reminded them of great fire stories from their Jewish ancestors. Like the fire of God that came out from the Tabernacle and consumed those leading a rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:35); or the fire which fell from heaven in response to the prayer of Elijah, and consumed the sacrifice he had placed on the altar on top of Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:38); or the fire which fell from heaven upon the great altar in front of the Temple in Jerusalem at the time King Solomon was dedicating the Temple (2 Chronicles 7:1). *These Jews knew fire represented the awesome, consuming power and holiness of God.* But fire coming from God to rest upon a person, not burning their heads, not consuming them or scorching the house where they waited... *now that was something new!*

Luke continued with one more powerful description of this Pentecost moment: **"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (languages) as the Spirit enabled them."** (Acts 2:4) Once again these Jews reflected back in the stories of their ancestors. King Saul, when first anointed by Samuel to be the first king of Israel, had experienced something similar. 1 Samuel 10:9 gives us the description: **"As Saul turned to leave Samuel God changed Saul's heart... a procession of prophets met Saul; the Spirit of God came upon Saul in power and he joined in their prophesying. When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets they asked each other, 'what is this that has happened to Saul?'"** Now, I don't know exactly what Saul was saying or doing, but clearly it was something recognizable as something *only prophets did under the powerful anointing of the Spirit of God*, but somehow Saul was also doing it?

Here in this house where a great wind, and tongues of fire had been seen, this group of people now heard something remarkable... they were all speaking in languages they had never spoken before!

Now wait a moment, you might ask. *How do we know that these were genuine human languages unknown to these with fire on their heads, but known to other people?* Luke gives us the answer in his continuing careful description in Acts 2:5-12. If you'll read those verses carefully, you'll see it for yourself.

First, Jerusalem was filled with visitors from all over the known world, who had come for the Pentecost Festival. (Acts 2:5)

Second, the great wind must have been heard by all in the city of Jerusalem for it quickly drew a large crowd to that part of the city, to see what was happening. (Acts 2:6)

Third, those who were anointed by the Holy Spirit had gone out from the windswept house, into the streets and were talking with these pilgrims who had come from all around the world. These visitors were amazed, flabbergasted, shocked that they heard their own languages being spoken by these anointed Jews in Jerusalem! (Acts 2:6)

Fourth, these amazed visitors actually identified and named the languages they heard being spoken by these Jesus followers! (Acts 2:7-11)

Fifth, like all people who see an unexplainable phenomenon, they asked a defining moment question: ***"Amazed and perplexed they asked one another, 'what does this mean'?"*** (Acts 2:12)

We're going to pause right here! You've probably been in a large crowd amazed by something... perhaps a fireworks display or a concert or a sporting event? So, it should be fairly easy for you to put yourself in the middle of this ***'amazed and perplexed'*** crowd in Jerusalem, *listening to excited Jewish friends of Jesus jabbering in languages they didn't know, but heard by excited people who recognize their mother tongues!* Quickly clusters of people gathered around each person speaking, drawn by the sound of their foreign language being spoken in Jerusalem at the Pentecost Festival! So, I ask you, my "walking with Jesus" friends, the question these visitors to Jerusalem were asking that day... ***"What does this mean?"*** and when we come back together tomorrow, I'll tell you what God says it all means!

Meanwhile... are you waiting for God to do something? *Perhaps in this event you can see God is never late! He was waiting for exactly the right moment for this remarkable miracle to shake an entire city.* Thousands and thousands of people were impacted that day! So be patient my friends and consider this from Isaiah 30:18 ***"...the LORD longs to be gracious to you... For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who WAIT for Him."***

Here's a song to help you find peace in your waiting...

Today's Scripture is Acts 2:1-12.