

**“The Power to Make a Difference”
Acts 2:1-4, 12-21**

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On a cold day, a man stood beside his automobile on an interstate highway signaling for assistance. A passing motorist stopped to help. He noticed that the car was a brand new Cadillac, 400 horsepower engine, stereo, power seats, power steering, power windows, power everything, equipped with the latest technology. The driver of the car turned out to be a head engineer and chief mechanic at a General Motors factory. The problem? The well-equipped car, with its knowledgeable driver, had run out of gas.

Could that be true of your life? You are well-equipped with the finest education and material necessities. You have more than you ever dreamed possible. Yet you are standing beside the road, burned out, empty, weary in well doing, feeling powerless. I wrote this sermon for you.

It might be summarized in an old song that Charles Gabriel wrote nearly 100 years ago:

Lord, as of old at Pentecost
Thou didst Thy power display.
With cleansing, purifying flame
Descend on us today.

Lord give us power. Not horse power, atomic power, industrial power, political power, purchasing power - not even man power, woman power or will power. We have tried all of those. What we really need is Divine Power,

Spiritual Power, power from on High. That's what Pentecost is all about.

In Creation, God watches over us. In Christ, God comes among us. But at Pentecost, God fills us with the Person of the Holy Spirit. With every ought of the Father, comes now a louder whisper from the Holy Spirit saying, "You can, you really can." You can make a difference. You can resist evil. You can endure hardship. You can be healed." Over the next few weeks, I want to talk with you about these things.

The power to make a difference comes to those who wait for the Lord.

The last word of Jesus to His disciples was, "Wait." Acts 1:4: *Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised.* Stop, stay put, don't move. Tarry, linger, pray. Moses waited forty years to learn the difference between self-determination and Divine liberation. Jesus waited thirty years to begin His public ministry. Thirteen years lapsed between Paul's conversion and his first missionary journey. Sometimes it causes me to wonder, to really, really wonder, if we have not, because we wait not. Even in a world of instant food and Internet banking and customer services, there are some things you just cannot rush. Flowers bloom in God's time. Babies are born in God's time. The wind blows where it wills. The Spirit comes, in God's time. And we who long to make a difference will be wise to use ideas like seeds, not bullets. We need to plant knowing that another will harvest. Take time to dig deep wells of prayer that won't run dry in the heat of the day. The power to make a difference comes to those who know how to wait.

The power to make a difference comes to those who communicate with one another. Verse 4 of the Scripture lesson: *And they were filled with the Holy Spirit*

and began to speak with other tongues so that each could hear in his own language. We don't need to speak in unknown tongues as much as we need to speak in understanding tongues. After all, the breakdown of communication sets father against son, and husband against wife, and the Israelis against the Palestinians, and the police force against children in Idaho. Everybody and everything is talking these days, they talk at us and to us. But sometimes I wonder, is anybody listening? Is anybody listening to children crying? Can anybody hear the widow weeping? How long can we ignore the cry of the needy?

A middle aged man entered a cocktail lounge and walked directly to the bar. "Do you have anything to cure the hiccups?" asked the man. Without saying a word, the bartender took a wet towel and slapped the man across the face with it. The shocked man asked, "What are you doing?" The bartender said, "You don't have the hiccups anymore, do you?" The man said, "I never had the hiccups, my wife has the hiccups, she's sitting out in the car!" Communication. It's even a problem for bartenders who are known to listen the best.

The Holy Spirit helps us communicate. I don't know how it works. I don't know how a lot of things work. I don't understand how a flip of the switch lets you hear_my voice in this vast place. A simple flip of the switch makes all the difference in your ability to hear my voice. The longer I live, the less I know, but of this I am absolutely certain. When the Holy Spirit fills a place, there are sweet expressions on each face. And when the Heavenly Dove fills you with God's love, there is no doubt that you have been touched from above. When fears give way to love, and competition is replaced by the paraclete, even enemies can meet and become one. The Holy Spirit helps us communicate one with another.

The power to make a difference comes to those who penetrate the world. A woodpecker was pecking away at a tree when lightning struck and destroyed it. As the woodpecker flew away, he said to himself, "I didn't know there was that much power in my beak!"

If we, in our own strength reside, our pecking will be minor. If we connect with the power of God, the results could be major. Isn't this the phenomenal story of the 1st century Church? Every time I read the Book of Acts, I am just overwhelmed by it. Absolutely amazed by it. Here we have Peter and Mary and James and Stephen and John. Not a credential, not a degree, not a title, not an ordination in the bunch. And yet they are so moved by the Spirit that they transform the world. That's not preaching, that's history. They literally transformed the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Since they had no need to be authorized, they could not be controlled. And when this official-less power clashes with powerless officials, there is no contest in the process.

My friend Chuck Hunter says, "You and I live in the new apostolic age." The Church of the 21st century is similar to the 1st century Church. We face a culture that must be informed of Christ. We must win friends and influence people with random acts of kindness and humble deeds of service. We must convince people that Christianity is true, through honest dialogue and good moral living. We must invite people to adopt the faith and join in this Messianic community to follow Jesus as Lord.

Lest we think that doesn't apply to Williamson county, the statistics that came across my desk just last week tells me 50% of this county is un-churched. The task is ours. To wait, to communicate, to penetrate the world in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When our boys were little, I would come home in the evenings and give them a big hug and a big kiss. Then I would toss them into the air, and catch them on the way down. We repeated that ritual again and again until my arms grew tired and I put them down. That's when they would grab me at the ankles and say, "Do it again, daddy, do it again!"

Sometimes when I realize that 120 scared Christian believers were so empowered by the Holy Spirit that they changed the world, I want to get hold of the heels of God and say, "Do it again, God, do it again!"