

First Presbyterian Church
Southampton, New York
“Your Dreams and Your Words will Change the World!”

Acts 2:1 – 21

Confirmation Sunday

May 31, 2015

The scene was a house, somewhere in the city of Jerusalem. The time was several weeks after the resurrection of Jesus. The occasion was the celebration of the Jewish festival of Pentecost... the traditional commemoration of God’s giving the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai, fifty days after the Exodus. By now, Jesus had made a number of post-resurrection appearances to His friends and followers; and, in the first chapter of the Book of Acts, He’d been taken back into heaven... leaving His disciples to carry on the gospel ministry in His name. He’d spent three years prepping His followers for this day; and now the time had come for them to step up from being mere followers, and into their new role as leaders.

But, as our text opens, the disciples find themselves stuck squarely in neutral. On the one hand, they’re absolutely thrilled that Jesus has been raised from the dead; Easter morning had revived their hopes, lifted their spirits, and changed their lives for the better, forever. When they saw Jesus alive, and well, and walking around outside His tomb, they knew that God was up to something important and meaningful and world-shaking... and they’d been invited by their Lord to be right smack in the middle of it all. The news could hardly have been better!

Yet, on the other hand, they’re still scared to death. They’re happy that Jesus has risen, but they’re acutely aware of the fact that the people who killed Him are still out there... and may be gunning for *them* now. Jesus Himself had even warned the disciples about this very threat, during one of their after-hours teaching sessions: *“If they’re willing to kill the master, how much more will they be willing to go after the people who follow.”*

So, they’re full of hope, yes; but they know they’re still in danger... from the Jewish leaders, from the Roman authorities, from who knows who else that might have a grudge against them. They know they’ve got good news to share; but, so far, they’ve lacked the nerve to get out there and share it. So far, they hadn’t done much of anything; except replace the scandalized Judas with a new disciple... Matthias. And so, as the sun came up on that first post-Easter Pentecost, the disciples are still hiding out; they’re still watching their backs; they still haven’t started their gospel mission. Almighty God has obviously done something great... but they’re not yet sure how *they’re* supposed to fit into the picture; and do all the things that their Lord is calling them to do.

Until now. Until this first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus. Because at this time, the Holy Spirit of God is poured out on those same disciples... and in addition to the hope, and joy, and wonderment that they already possessed after Jesus’ resurrection, they’ve now received *power*. *God’s* power, to do God’s work, and to build God’s kingdom. They already knew the truth; with the giving of His Spirit, God now gave them the wisdom, and the boldness, and the courage to go out and proclaim that truth; and to live that truth; and to change the world with that truth.

It must have been quite a sight to see and hear! The sound of a hurricane wind rushing through the building; tongues of fire dancing around the room, and flickering over peoples' heads; everybody proclaiming the gospel, not in gibberish, but in all the known languages of the world! No wonder some of the more skeptical onlookers thought that the whole house had gotten a head start on happy hour! But as we saw from the text, the newly emboldened disciple Peter stood up and set everybody straight as to what was really going on. This was no drunken revel... it was the fulfilment of a prophecy from the Book of Joel.

"Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem," Peter said, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It is only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

The Spirit of God, empowering His people to do great things in His name. The presence of God, making it possible for His people to make a real difference in His name. That's what was going on, during that first post-Easter Pentecost. And, although the scene and the circumstances are very different now... (there's no rushing wind, and we've got too many firemen here for any tongues of fire to be dancing around;) although the scene is different, the same thing's going on here this morning, that was happening on Pentecost, so long ago.

God is giving His Spirit, His wisdom, His power, and His grace to these young disciples in our Confirmation class... and He's preparing them to go out and make a difference for Christ, just as He prepared Peter, and James, and John and all the other original disciples, in that room that day, on Pentecost. This is the day when the Lord puts His arms around these wonderful kids, and tells them *"I've got great plans for you! And I'm going to use the things you say, and the things you do, and the dreams you dream, to do great things in this world; to bring hope and grace to this world; to build a small part of God's kingdom in this world, right here and right now!"*

And that's my message to our Confirmation class this morning: God has plans for you! God's going to do something great with you! Now it's your dreams, your vision, your bold and prophetic words that will make a difference for good in our hurting world; if you will just keep your eyes on Christ, and remember to trust Him, and to follow Him, all the days of your life!

So, **Caroline Jungck**: you may win a state cross-country championship before you graduate from high school; and you may go on to become the first American woman to win the Boston Marathon since Lisa Weidenbach in 1985. Or you may become the next Hillary Dobbs, and win the Hampton Classic Grand Prix! But wherever the future takes you Caroline, remember that God loves you and has great plans for you... and He will use **your** dreams and your words to make a difference in this world! And don't you forget it!

Asia Cofield: you may play in the New York Philharmonic someday... or you may go international and join the London Symphony Orchestra. Or, you may become the next Anna Phoebe and land a gig with the Trans Siberian Orchestra... and prove to the world that violinists can rock out as well as anyone! Hey, you may even become known someday as the Shinnecock Itzhak Perlman! But, wherever the future takes you Asia, remember that God loves you and has great plans for you... and He will use **your** dreams and your words to make a difference in this world! And don't you forget it!

Andrew Judd: you may become the next Nelson DeMille, and write a bestselling thriller about life in East Quogue. Or you may become a literature professor at Princeton, or Harvard, or even Cal State Fullerton. Or you may become an architect, or an artist, or an illustrator of comic books and graphic novels! But, wherever the future takes you, Andrew, remember that God loves you and has great plans for you... and He will use *your* dreams and your words to make a difference in this world! And don't you forget it!

Emma Armus: you may wind up on Chopped someday... or Top Chef, or Hell's Kitchen, or Cupcake Wars, or any of the other cooking shows... and you just might win them all! Or you might get hired by one of these fancy-pants Hamptons restaurants... and come up with an award-winning recipe for turducken, or scallop tetrizzini, or green bean guacamole surprise! Or you may just jump on a plane, fly to Kona, Hawaii... and win the women's division of the Ironman Triathlon. But, wherever your future takes you, Emma, remember that God loves you and has great plans for you... and He will use *your* dreams and your words to make a difference in this world! And don't you forget it!

Henry Hildreth: you may decide to open a department store here in the village... you could call it, like, "Hildreth's." Okay, don't do that. But, you may become an animal expert someday, like Jack Hannah, or Dr. Pol, or even Cesar Millan. You may build the first zoo in the history of Southampton... or maybe you'll get your own nationally syndicated radio show, "Talkin' Sheep with Henry Hildreth!" But, wherever your future takes you, Henry, remember that God loves you and has great plans for you... and He will use *your* dreams and your words to make a difference in this world! And don't you forget it!

Thomas Lawton: you may win an Academy Award someday, or an Emmy, or a Tony, or a Grammy. Heck, maybe you'll win 'em all... at the same time! Maybe you'll land onstage on Broadway... or singing in some opera at the Met. Or maybe you'll wind up at Wimbledon, serving and volleying and telling the chair umpire "*That ball was in!*" But, wherever your future takes you, Thomas, remember that God loves you and has great plans for you... and He will use *your* dreams and your words to make a difference in this world! And don't you forget it!

And **Haley Dressler:** you may make the finals of American Idol someday, or The Voice, or America's Got Talent. You may become the next great American pop-star... and record some songs that will give your poor Dad a glimmer of hope that modern rock music isn't completely dead! Or maybe you'll play college softball somewhere, and be on ESPN's Women's College World Series broadcast... and maybe you'll get the winning hit to win the championship. But, wherever your future takes you, Haley, remember that God loves you and has great plans for you... and He will use *your* dreams and your words to make a difference in this world! And don't you forget it!

Confirmands, you guys have done a great job... and it's been a real joy to me to be your teacher. And I know I speak for the whole church family when I say that we're very proud of you, and happy for you! And I look forward to sharing the life of discipleship with you... to learning *with* you, and *from* you; to going out into this world together, and making a difference for good, in Jesus' name. And as you... and I... and all the rest of this wonderful church family go out and make that difference for good, let's always remember that our dreams, and our words, really will change the world for the Lord! And don't you ever forget it!

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen!