

The glory about to be revealed is the power of the Spirit working in and through us to the world. The Spirit melts us, molds us, fills us, and uses us to bring God’s glory into the world. This is what Pentecost is really about- a new beginning in the power of the Spirit!

I want to make a bold claim today! The glory about to be revealed to the early church in which Paul was speaking, has, is, and always will be, the glory about to be revealed in every time. For us, that means just as we read about and proclaim God doing a thing- mighty things- in the early church, God is doing a thing right now and God is going to continue doing a thing. God is alive! And today, the person of God we celebrate in full activity and power, is God the Holy Spirit. Like the wind, we may not always see the Spirit at work with our eyes, but we will feel and experience the Spirit’s presence.

To dig a little deeper into the power of Pentecost today, we could read the story of the first Pentecost in Acts and discuss what took place in that gathering of the early church, however, Paul’s letter to the Romans invites us to look at the back drop of that early church to know of what the people at the time were experiencing and why Paul was trying to inspire them to focus on the future of God’s glory and not what around them may be distracting them or stealing from God’s glory.

Read Romans 8:18-30

We Didn’t Start the Fire, a cover song by Billy Joel of newsworthy events from 1989 to 2023, contains the chorus:

*We didn't start the fire... It was always burning since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire... No, we didn't light it, but we're trying to fight it*

What fire is the song talking about? What the world is focused on and what the world is celebrating. The chaos of the world. The crazy things people do. The things that happen that make people crazy.

*Deep fakes, earthquakes... Oklahoma City bomb, Pokémon... Tiger Woods, MySpace
Harry Potter, Twilight... Nuclear accident, Kim Jong Un... Robert Downey Jr., Iron Man
More war in Afghanistan, Cubs go all the way again... War on Terror, QAnon
Trump gets impeached twice, Polar bears got no ice
Fyre Fest, Black Parade, Michael Phelps, Y2K
Stranger Things, Tiger King... Sandy Hook, Columbine, ISIS... Meghan Markle, George Floyd
Michael Jordan 23 & 45, YouTube killed MTV... Bush v. Gore, I can't take it anymore*

*Elon Musk, Kaepernick... Jeff Bezos, climate change, white rhino goes extinct
Great Pacific Garbage Patch, Mars rover, Avatar, self-driving electric cars
World trade, second plane, what else do I have to say?*

*We didn't start the fire... It was always burning since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire... No, we didn't light it, but we're trying to fight it on*

There is a pretty good chance each of us can recall and provide some information on at least half, if not a whole lot more, of the things listed in this song. We pay attention to the world around us and what is happening. It is hard not to with all the news outlets and ways to receive information these days. News is “breaking” all the time, and we are able to get it instantly. Dare I say it then, that if it is newsworthy, it gets celebrated, and many times even glorified.

It wasn't so different during biblical times. Sure, it would have been different people- maybe Pontus Pilate, Caesar, Roman Centurions, Pharisees, Sadducees, Tax Collectors, Greek gods; it would have been different phenomena's- demon possession, leprosy, magical miracles, golden horses; and it would have included different events bringing chaos- crucifixion, gladiator games, empirical conquering. Many people and things were celebrated and glorified. The world, that of Israel we read about in the bible, had plenty of newsworthy events happening.

The chorus of *We Didn't Start the Fire* could have been written then.

*We didn't start the fire... It was always burning since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire... No, we didn't light it, but we're trying to fight it*

Is that it though? Is what is mentioned on the news and what is newsworthy to the world all that is happening? If you are thinking “No” you would be right. Consider the first Pentecost in which the Holy Spirit descended upon the early church. It certainly caused a stir, and for some that stir was nothing but confusion and fear. For others though, specifically those who believed in Christ and the Holy Spirit as one with God, it was a sign that God was doing a good and faithful thing. As we, today, encounter the story of the first Pentecost, it is clear that it was God ushering in a new glory for the people of God. And that new glory is what Paul is focused on in his letter to the Romans.

The point is this... the fire of the world has been burning for quite some time. Did we start the fire? No. The fire of chaos in the world has been far before you and I even took a breath. We didn't start the fire. We didn't light it. **But... the fire of God, the Holy Spirit, has been burning brighter and for longer and through the Holy Spirit, aren't we trying to fight the fires of the world?** Upon Jesus' ascension to be with God in heaven, the disciples and apostles and believers in Christ's new church lived and worked through the

power of the Holy Spirit to fight the fires of chaos in the world. Perhaps no one knew this better than Paul, who converted to Christianity out of what was a very worldly focused life. With Christ as his beacon and the Spirit as his fuel, Paul spoke truth of the glory about to be revealed.

1. Paul writes, **“The sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.”** The glory to come will far exceed the fire in front of us in our present time. And this glory is not only for humanity but for all creation. Hear this: Times right now are confusing, aren't they? It can be difficult to swallow all of what is happening and when, can't it? Even though we may be distracted by the fire of chaos in the world, God isn't. Our trust and faith in who God is tells us God is creating and God's new glory is happening! In what is happening right now, there is a glory about to be revealed to us! What glory? The Glory of God. The Glory of the Lord. The victory of God's love and grace and peace and the creating of God's kingdom.
 - a. The people in the church on the first day of Pentecost were confused. Very confused. They were suffering even. What had happened to them? What was happening to them? “They couldn't understand each other.” “They were speaking foreign languages to each other.” “They were groaning in labor pains.” However, to what they thought was damaging and destroying, God was creating and empowering. God, through the Holy Spirit, arrived and brought understanding, unity, redemption, and salvation to their lives. God worked in and through the mess to bring glory to them!
 - b. What does this tell us? It tells us God will work in and through our mess, our fires, the world's chaos, to bring glory to us as well!
2. What do we do then? We HOPE. This doesn't mean wish upon a shooting star and wait for luck to strike with the odds of winning the lottery. That is not hope. That is wishful thinking in a fantasy world. HOPE is embedded in something firm and reliable. Hope in God is sure for God's promises are sure and God is faithful. In times of uncertainty and chaos, it is best to HOPE in God; **“wait for adoption by God- the redemption of our bodies; wait for what we do not see with patience.”**
3. What do we do then? We TRUST. **“The Spirit helps us in our weakness... intercedes with sighs too deep for words... intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”** The only sense and understanding coming out of the early church in which the Spirit descended was going to be revealed by God and empowered by God. It wasn't the people's own understanding that fueled them. The time had come in which God revealed the power of the Spirit and called the church to “follow me.” For those who loved God, who followed God in HOPE and TRUST for God's glory, good things would come- sense of call and purpose, justification, love, joy, salvation, and glorification.
 - a. **“God works in all things for the good of those who love God and are called according to God's purposes.”** (8:28)

4. What do we do then? We FIGHT. But not with each other. And not with other churches. Alongside each other and with the power of the Holy Spirit. Here is the good news. We are not fighting the fire alone. The Holy Spirit is with us. Yes! And... I want to ask us to do something, that comes from an illustration Charlie Burton shared with me this week. He shared an experience about another pastor who asked a congregation to look at one another. The denomination of this particular congregation was working through some difficult challenges with decisions that gave the impression the church needed to split- some of the members and churches felt one way so they were going to go their way and some of the members and churches felt another way so they were going to go the other way and still some other members and churches felt even differently and so they were going to go a different way. Once united in the pew and able to worship God as one, but in this recent chaos, it didn't look probable that the members and churches would be united any longer. Sounds a bit like a Pentecost moment of confusion and fire. Yes! And a Pentecost moment with the new beginning and glory possible.

“Go ahead,” the pastor said. “Look around you at each other. I don't mean take a glance at them; I mean really look at them. Do you see them? Do you really see them? These are the folks we are fighting alongside. We are not alone. We are members of Christ's church and being members of Christ's church means we have brothers and sisters united with us in our mission and ministry to serve God and be all God is calling us to be. Are there fires? Is there chaos? Yes, for sure. All the more reason for us to be united together and fight for God's glory, which is, because God is faithful, going to be revealed to all of us and all of creation.”

A Pentecost blessing was shared with me this week and I want to pass it along to all of you. I pray it won't only be something you pray and hold on to only today, but every day.

May the mystery of the Holy Spirit dwell in you, that you may hear the voice of grace even in strange places and foreign tongues. May the wind of the Holy Spirit move you to cross boundaries and defy divisions to love those who are different from you. May the breath of the Holy Spirit breathe in you to forgo all comfort and familiarity to meet others where they are. May the fountain of the Holy Spirit flow in you with courage and humility to learn anew, to be awkward and foolish for the sake of love. May the fire of the Holy Spirit burn brightly in you, that in all you do others may see in you the warm light of the steady love of God.

Let all God's people say, Amen.

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Gracious and Eternal God, what is the glory about to be revealed to us and all your creation?

May we hope in you, Lord.

May we trust you, Lord.

May we surrender our burdens, and the fire of chaos in the world to you.

May we truly believe that your will will be done, and your glory will be revealed.

We pray for peace and discernment to accept the things that are out of our control.

We pray for faith that no matter who comes against us you will turn it around for good.

May we trust the plan you have over life and may we know it is better than our own.

We pray that you, God, will continue to be with us and guide us as we move through this beautiful world you created.

All glory be to you God, for all glory belongs to you. Your name and your power are alone worthy to be praised.

We offer you now God the personal prayers of our hearts and minds in the silence of this moment... Hear our prayers.

In the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord and Savior, who taught his disciples of every time and place to pray together. **Our Father...**