

Whatever happened to Peter?

Message for Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2013
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Acts 1:4-8, Acts 2:2-4, 38

Hi. I'm Peter. I was here back in March and told you what it was like to be one of Jesus disciples. The highlight of that talk was when – for a few seconds at least – I completely and utterly trusted Jesus, and walked on water. What an incredible experience that was!

How could I have known that that wasn't the end? In fact, it was just the beginning! It didn't seem like that at first, though...

After Jesus rose from the dead on Easter, he visited with us several times, to teach us, encourage us, and to give us our final instructions. Here's what he said shortly before he returned to his Father in heaven.

Acts 1:4-8, Today's English Version:

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised. John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

When the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?"

Jesus said to them, "The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus had given us a mission: to take the Good News of his love and forgiveness into all the world. But we must not start right away; we were supposed to wait in Jerusalem until God the Father filled us with the Holy Spirit.

So, after Jesus was gone, we went back into the city, back to the place where we stayed. We waited. And waited. And waited.

We spent a lot of time praying, opening ourselves to whatever it was that God was planning, and just simply spending time with God.

And we waited still more. We waited two days. Three days. A whole week. And still nothing had happened.

You may know a bit about me from the other times I've been here: I like to be in on the action, rather than

standing around watching others. When there's work to be done, I jump right in and get going... sometimes before I've listened to the instructions. Like that time I mentioned before, walking on the water. I tend to act first and think later.

So this business of sitting around and waiting was especially hard for me. I've thought a lot about that since then, wondering why Jesus would do that to us. Then it hit me: maybe he did it on purpose to teach us a lesson: that being in tune with him is always, *always* more important than whatever job we may be working on. I'm so focussed on *doing* the work that it's easy for me to put to one side the need to simply *be* with Jesus. The reason why this is important is easy to see: if I do the work first, I will *never* have time to be with Jesus. As soon as I finish one job, there will be ten more things demanding to be done RIGHT NOW.

And then I found out something else: after I've taken the time to be with Jesus, the work that I'm doing somehow gets done faster and better than if I had just gone ahead and done it. You know, I've found that's true whether it's talking with someone about their problems or working on my fishing boat. And others say they can tell the difference in me as well: when I haven't spent time with the Lord, they tell me I get so impatient.

Yes, I've learned the importance of waiting, and just *being* with the Lord.

Well, back to my story... Finally after TEN whole days, he came! Who came? The Holy Spirit came! I've heard a lot of people talk about the Holy Spirit as "it," but that's not right. The Holy Spirit is God, not an "it."

It's very interesting how Luke, our church historian, described this moment in the book of Acts.

Acts 2:2-4, Today's English Version:

Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

What I mean is, he described what it *looked* like; he didn't say anything about how it *felt*. That's probably just as well. Otherwise you'd have people saying things like, "You didn't have this experience? Then you don't really have the Holy Spirit!" Come to think of it, you do have people talking like that anyway. But the point is: they're just saying that from the Bible.

Some people today when they receive the Holy Spirit tell about feeling something like a powerful electric current going through their bodies. Some people talk about a sensation of warmth and love all over. Some people start shaking uncontrollably. Some fall down as if dead. And some don't feel a thing — nothing at all. Yet the Holy Spirit is present and working in all their lives. You see, the most important thing here isn't what *I* feel. The key thing is that Jesus has promised to give to his followers his Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came, he would fill us with power. I mentioned before that when my life is focussed on Jesus, then everything else works much better, too. But when I don't take time for Jesus, I end up frustrated and angry a lot; people can actually see the difference in me. I think that's the power that Jesus was talking about.

Maybe some of you people are wondering about this. Maybe you'd like to receive the Holy Spirit in your life, too. Maybe you need that Holy Spirit power.

I'll tell you the same thing I told the people in Jerusalem on that day.

Acts 2:38, Today's English version:

Peter said to them, "Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit."

When you give your life over to God — to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit — when you turn away from the wrong things in your life and submit your whole life to Jesus as Lord, then the Holy Spirit comes and lives in you. That's the key to becoming a Christian and growing as a Christian.

Maybe you've always thought being a Christian only meant coming to worship and taking your turn helping out in the church. Maybe what I'm telling you is something new. It's not new, of course. It's two thousand years old.

But *you* can be new. That's what happens when the Holy Spirit fills you. You become a new person. You have new attitudes. You see people in a new way. You have new values. You have new power.

Jesus is offering this life to you. If that's the kind of person you'd like to be, you can. You just pray and ask him to come in and fill you.

Next Step:

- ◆ Surrender your life to Jesus; invite the Holy Spirit to come in.

Lord Jesus, thank-you for all that you've done for us:

- you came to our world to show us God's way and God's love;
- you gave your life for us, so that we might have eternal life;
- you call us to follow you, to fulfill the real purpose for our lives.

And you promise to be with us, through the Holy Spirit living in us. Come, Lord Jesus; come, Holy Spirit. Come and make this heart your home. Do your work of molding and shaping us so that we grow more and more like Jesus every day.