

Message – Pentecost
John 14:8-27; Acts 2:1-21
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Radical Rootedness
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Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost; the birth of the church, with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a festive time, with the color red flowing. Pentecost is about growing. So, last night 5 perfect babies were welcomed as the newest members into the church through baptisms and this morning, at 10:45 4 more will be baptized.

Some of us are here because we've been invited to come as friends of Christ Church and share in this worship celebration. On this feast of Pentecost, happy birthday everyone!! This is a great party! We have much thanks to give as we remember today, especially our roots, how we came to be born as the church.

As faithful people, as the church, we live lives obeying God. For most of us, as God's people, we live ordinary lives. We're born into loving, dedicated families. We attend school learning to grow into fulfilling relationships and meaningful jobs. We take time to care for one another and find joy in play and recreation. We partner and parent and befriend, celebrating life's pivotal events: birthdays, graduations, weddings, anniversaries, baptisms, sorrows and successes. Much of the time, we do what is basic. This is the way it is with God's people, then and now. But, as **God's people**, there is something that sets us apart, and it is just that: we are **God's people**, chosen by God to do God's work; to love and care, and tend, here, in our very neighborhood, on our streets, at the store, in our work places, in our schools, and in the world, near and far. So, that actually, as God's people, we're probably not so ordinary. In fact, as God's people, we're quite extraordinary. We're radical. So, today, I'd like to talk with you a bit about what it means to be radically rooted as God's people.

Throughout recent history, language has come to define the word radical as: a sharp departure from the usual or the ordinary. A radical is a person who strives to make extreme changes to an institution, a government or a society; a person or people who favor fundamental change from accepted traditional forms. The word radical actually finds its origin in the Latin word, radix which means root. In other words, to be radical is to get to the bottom of something; to have thought and action that digs to the basics, the fundamental essentials of something, the root of the matter. Mathematicians find the square root of a number to get to the basics. Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower that healthy rootedness yields abundant, rich harvests. Radical rootedness is knowing the source of our being, clarity about our cause.

This is the purpose of the story we hear in the books of Acts today: it's the miraculous story of God's people being born into the root of their being that results in fundamental change as these faithful people form the church. You see, these first Christians, these twelve disciples, eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, death and resurrection, probably didn't know what was really happening to them when they were born into the church. Jesus tells them before he ascends that he will send the Paraclete, the comforter, the advocate, our protector, our support. This Holy Spirit, Jesus promises, will be with us forever and teach us everything. This is the Spirit of truth who leads us to the full understanding of Christ, the meaning of the words of Christ, his actions, his signs of love,

and mercy. So, they wait, these faithful Jews, gathering for the feast of Pentecost; one of the three essential feasts laid down in the covenant made between God and Moses and the people at Mt. Sinai. Pentecost, is the 50 days following the Passover feast. It marks the end of the wheat harvest, the first fruits of labor sowed in the fields; a celebration of God rooting God's people in the basics of the earth. The disciples rest in the roots of their tradition, planted deep; deep enough it seems, to take them on radical new journeys. Suddenly the disciples are pounded by a loud sound that can only be compared to a howling wind and the unimaginable tongues of fire resting on their heads. Just as Jesus promised, they're filled with the Holy Spirit, given a variety of gifts. But, first and foremost, all are given the gift of speech.

Remarkably, all are able to comprehend and understand in the noise. They're remembering that God's presence is often rooted in loud sounds. God comes in the noise, of the loud trumpeting sound atop Mt. Sinai at the issue of the Law; in the war cry of the Hebrew people carrying the ark of God into the Israel camp; and God comes in the sound of screeching wind as the prophet Elijah ascends to meet with God. God comes in the noise...

Late last Monday evening, the Christ Church mission team returned from its second trip to Haiti. Thank you for your support and prayers during this time. You'll hear more about Haiti from Matt Brengman at the end of this message. There's much for us to understand about how God works in Haiti. Haiti is a hot place. So, much of the day's activities happens out doors, in the early morning and the late evening, outside of the heat of the day. And, because we're outside, Haiti is noisy. Haitians walk back and forth on the gravel roads carrying their wares in large baskets, or tin, round shaped tubs, balanced on twisted cloth, mounted on their heads. As they walk, they cry out, selling their goods. Dogs bark. Pigs grunt. Goats, rummage through the rubble and debris bawling and baying. Occasionally racing across the unpaved roads, stirring up dust and dirt, motorcyclists and truck drivers race along reminding us of the lack of noise controls on vehicles. On the feast of the Ascension, we awoke in the wee hours of the morning, long before the sun arose, to the noise of praise and worship and shouts of Alleluia on the streets of St. Marc. Some 4.2 million, nearly half the population of Haiti, are children. At least ½ million now live in orphanages. Just like the children here, they walk to school; they play after school; they sing and dance and cry and want. So, often the noise we hear in Haiti is the voices of precious, beautiful, very needy, desperate children. We're learning from the Episcopal Church in Haiti that the highest priority since the earthquake is care for the children. Caring for the children means getting them back in school so they can have a chance to learn and change their circumstances. So, we also hear the noise of banging and pounding in the rebuilding of Haiti. And, somehow in all the cacophony of noise, ringing in hope for the future, God is present.

Sometimes, when there's a lot of noise in our lives...when the business of life is just putting us in a tailspin and we don't know which direction to travel, when we find that our words are not heard, and our speech is jumbled and confused, we search to understand. Maybe it is that we just need to go back to the basics. We need to grab hold of what is essential, the very root of who we are. We just need to be radical.

For us, being radical means, we follow Jesus Christ. That's exactly where we go, to Jesus. We go to his teachings, his Word. We remember that he calls us to be his holy people, to gather in prayer and worship, to persevere in resisting all those temptations that

take us away from our roots, to practice what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to look for the face of Jesus in every face, to strive for justice and peace, to serve others. These are our roots, given to us in Jesus Christ. Going back to who we are, to what is essential to what we know to be true, is found in our baptism. It's in our baptism where we are washed in the love and mercy of Jesus Christ and our roots are firmly planted, watered, fed and nurtured in the strength of the Holy Spirit. In worship last night and today at 10:45 Molly, Grace, Claire, Shelton, Christian, Brookes, Isabella, Caedence and Grayson have been and will be washed and anointed in the roots of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. We give thanks for how God, through our baptism give us our roots; that in the Holy Spirit, we're given the gift of grace, God's favor upon us, we're granted the forgiveness of sins, and we're welcomed into the body of Christ. These roots call us to live, grace filled, redeemed lives in Christ, with one another.

The earliest Christians didn't count on the propelling action of the Holy Spirit. As faithful Jews, followers of the Judaic Law, they don't know that the Spirit will lead them outside of Jerusalem, beyond their comfort zone, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in Antioch, where they will serve as sowers of roots to Gentiles, those yet to know the gift of Jesus Christ. But, they go, trusting in what is rooted in them, the surprising and amazing truth of the love of Jesus Christ. This Pentecost feast story, of the birth of the church in first century Palestine, is our story today. We are this same church sowing the seeds of radical rootedness. Those first church members gathered regularly to worship, and say their prayers; they shared generously. They lived united, heart and soul, and none was ever in want. The church grew and grew in this radical living, reaching out to one another, extending the gift of Jesus' grace and mercy. Today, we do the same. We reach out, extend, and invite others to join in the radical rootedness in Jesus Christ. And, we do this because Jesus tells us to, we're called to do the work he does.

So, over these last weeks, we've asked Christ Church to be active in inviting a friend to worship. If you're here today for the first time, or coming again as a friend of Christ Church, we're really glad you're here with us. You may well have a church home. If you do, we give thanks. If you don't and you're looking for a church home, we hope Christ Church will become home for you; a place where you can journey back to the basics, discover what is essential and fundamental to your life, to know the love and mercy of Jesus Christ. Following worship today, please, friends, gather outside, to visit a bit, have some lemonade and cookies, meet members of the Newcomer Ministry team, learn a little bit about Christ Church; find your way around our space, spend time learning about Kid's Quest who celebrate their end of the year today. Our hope is that you will find worshiping with us a pathway to what is an essential and fundamental truth, the love of Christ. May being a friend of Christ Church propel you into being radically rooted in Jesus Christ.

Our rootedness stretches with friends near and far. Last Sunday morning Christ Church gathered at 9:00 a.m. for worship, here in Short Pump. At exactly the same time, 1,350 miles away, Christ Church gathered for worship with our friends with St. Paul's Episcopal Church, in Montrois, Haiti, about 30 miles from Port-au-Prince. When you made announcements, our friends at St. Paul's made announcements. When you sang, we sang, your prayers were our prayers, when you shared in the bread and cup, we did as well. Together, across the miles, we share in our common rootedness of Jesus Christ in

this holy church and for this we give thanks. So, today, happy birthday, church. Celebrate and proclaim the marvels of God.

I imagine life is probably just a bit fuller now than it was then with those first church planters. We're just noisier and more complicated. We probably need to listen and search all the more for our truths. Perhaps we even need to put aside, or let go of some things that prevent us from finding our radical rootedness. Jesus tells us, don't let our hearts be troubled. It's this simple. Jesus says: believe in me, love me, my own peace I give you. Let those words blow in, that we may find our radical rootedness and live with one another, near and far, in all that we do as the truth of Jesus.