New Dimension Living


I

When you've lived as long as I have, you've seen people try to find happiness, satisfaction and fulfillment in a whole lot of different ways.

I especially remember the Seventies. The Seventies were not all about Watergate. They were not only about bell bottoms, side burns and the first portable hair dryers. They were not just about Stevie Wonder, Led Zeppelin, Elton John, and the Rolling Stones. No, the Seventies became known as the Me Decade, as people decided it was time to find themselves. It became "all about me."

Then came the Eighties and the Nineties and the search for experience was added to the search for wealth and lots of it. And we know where that combination led. Nothing wrong with finding ourselves, nothing wrong with making a lot of money – as long as we don't forget about God in the process. But as we know, in the process, a whole lot of people have forgotten about God. People have been leaving the churches in ever-increasing waves, seeking satisfaction in all kinds of non-spiritual ways.

And where has all this led? To a stronger, emotionally healthier, saner, more moral and more profoundly fulfilled society? I would suggest it has not.

Because I believe with all my heart that the stronger our relationship with God the greater life satisfaction we are going to experience.

In some ways, that's what this day – Pentecost – is all about.

II

I love the story of Pentecost. The people gathered in the upper room devoutly praying for God to come to them. Then the explosive wind, the fire that lands on their heads but doesn't burn, their outbursts of joy and speaking in languages they've never learned, Peter galvanized to run out and preach such a powerful sermon 3,000 people are converted on the spot. I love this graphic, over the top, glorious story. I wish it would happen to us, right here, this morning.
But the whole thing is so far off, so bizarre, so other-worldly. It happened so long ago. Certainly, it defies reason. What, if anything, does this Holy Spirit's explosive arrival a couple of thousand years ago have to do with us, with our lives now?

The answer is everything. Everything, that is, if we want to obey God. And everything if we want deeply satisfied lives.

Because God's plan when He created us was that we could only be made whole, only be completed, only be our fully realized selves when we live in a second dimension. He loves us as we are. But He has plans for us. He wants us to be more, experience more. He wants us to live in a new dimension – a Holy Spirit dimension.

A lot of Christians go through life and never get to Pentecost. Some get stuck at Good Friday. Good Friday is key to Christianity: God's sacrifice for our sins.

But God didn't stop there. He rose from the dead. Easter signals Jesus' and our victory over death. Some people stop at Easter. And Easter is a wonderful place to be. We must always keep both the cross and the empty tomb in our hearts and minds.

But God has more for us. He has Pentecost for us. He has in mind for you and me the baptism, the immersing, and the in-filling of His Spirit. He wants us to experience and live our lives out of the power of God. He wants us to experience new dimension living.

The first dimension: we are born. The second dimension: we live not on our own; we live BY His Spirit resident within us.

The church believes we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism. But there's a major leap between having God's Spirit within us and living according to His Spirit. Or, we might say, tapping into the power of His Spirit.

The Holy Spirit given us in our baptism is like a warm coal. Imagine a barely-lit charcoal briquette. It's warm but it's a long way from hot. It has to be fanned before it can burst into flame.

It's like having a huge bank account of money. But all that money doesn't do you any good because you don't have any way of drawing on the funds. Then God gives you a check.

God wants us to sign the check. He wants to fan the warm coal into a flame. He wants us to tap the resource He has put within us. That resource is Him.
But how do we do it? How do we live in the second dimension – the new dimension of peace, joy and power – God wants each one of us to experience?

We do it by following a blueprint for living that you find when you spend time studying the Bible. I call this guide to Holy Spirit living The Principle of the Five As.

The first A: acknowledge. First we have to acknowledge the basics. Which are: God exists and He has put His Spirit within us to reveal to us His plan for our lives and help us live out that plan.

This may sound simplistic. But it's not. These are huge concepts. I could preach a whole series of sermons, teach a class, write a book on these five A's. Maybe someday I'll do one or the other. Today, we only have time for the most cursory overview. But I feel I must share these five As with you, even superficially, because I feel God wants me to. I could not preach a more important sermon, because these As are how we live our lives as Christians. These are the Cliff Notes of the Christian walk.

The first A: acknowledge.

The second A: abide. What I mean by "abide" is what the Bible means when it says we are supposed to live our lives abiding in God. As close to Him as the branch of a grapevine, that's how He wants us to spend our days in relationship with Him. That's how we bear fruit. That's how we are able to soak up His guidance; how we experience the best He has for us: by sticking close to Him.

The third A: ask. Ask Him. For what? Why, for what we want Him to do for us – right?

Sometimes. But not all the time. Of course, sometimes we should ask Him for what we want and need and for the sake of others we know and care about.

But there's a new dimension of prayer that takes us to another level. It happens when we ask God to give us what HE wants us to have; when we ask Him to show us what HE wants us to do; when we actually say, "Lord, I want Your will for my life. Please show me what Your will is. Please help me live out Your plan for me."

That may not be the most commonly-prayed prayer, but it's a prayer that makes God happy and ultimately helps us find our best lives. Because He knows better than we do what's right and good and best for us.
The fourth A: anticipate. Anticipate that God is going to answer you, that He will in fact give you the wisdom, the guidance, the understanding you need for the living of each day, for the making of life decisions, for the best and most satisfying and most fulfilling use of your time, talents and energy.

Acknowledge His presence in your life. Abide in Him. Ask Him for what you need and how to live according to His highest goal for you. Anticipate; expect, as in a pregnancy, the birth of a revelation, the unfolding of a cherished plan, the distant dream become reality.

Number five: act. Our God is a God of action. He's always on the move. And when we have His green light, He wants us to move out – in His power and according to His will – into the abundant life He wants us all to have.

The Lord is here day by day, minute by minute, to give us what we need for the living of each day. The guidance of His Spirit is "New every morning," the psalmists tell us.

III