

John 17:20-26

THERE WAS A BIG HOLE IN THE SKY. A loud silence! Jesus was gone!

They stood there with their faces turned up and their mouths open. Two shining beings brought them confirmation of what somehow, they already knew: they knew this was a forever kind of change.

Things were never going to be the same ever again.

Jesus was gone, but he did leave definite instructions: Don't leave town!

Remember, Jesus had told them, "Go into all the world! Begin in Jerusalem and go to Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth— but for NOW— don't leave town!"

I have Something— Someone— that I want to give you! I promise!

So, in obedience the disciples went back to Jerusalem.

What did they do when they went back? Did they grumble, act impatient, try to push the issue...no, they waited. And they prayed.

During the next ten days there was a focus in their faith that brought them to where the scriptures say they were "in one place in one accord."

Can you think of a time where you were ever "in one place in one accord." What brought you to that place?

WHAT OR WHERE IS THIS PLACE WHERE PENTECOST COMES?

For the disciples it was the Upper Room, the place where they had had Communion with Jesus.

That place became a place of unity of PURPOSE and OBEDIENCE.

Everything else went "on hold" until God came as He had promised.

It was also a place of unity in FAITH and TRUST.

The Resurrection had given them faith to know that Jesus is as good as His Word!

That living faith was enough to hold them steady if they had to wait one day or ten days or more.

Church, do we have living faith? A faith and trust to hold steady in the midst of our waiting for Him to answer our prayers....which He promises he will.

The upper room for the disciples was a place where Jesus' own prayer is answered: During the ten days they waited, the disciples certainly remembered the last prayer Jesus had prayed when they were together in this same Upper Room.

It was a prayer for Himself: "Father, glorify me with the glory I had before the world!"(Jn 17:5) It became a prayer for them: "Father, let these my friends share that glory, too!"

But wonder of wonders, that High Priestly Prayer is a prayer for you and me! We, too, can come to the place where Pentecost happens!

It was a prayer for unity: "Make them one, Father! One with us— one with one another!" That prayer for unity was a feature of the High Priestly prayer that hits us right in the face. It is inescapable.

CAN PENTECOST BE REPEATED?

It has been many times, in many places. In one real sense Pentecost happens every time a soul is born into the Kingdom, or every time a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit.

But as a mighty moving of God on His church? Can that happen again? I believe the answer is "Yes!" I also believe it is the only hope for the church to survive as the church and make any impact at all on this generation. "Yes!"

CAN WE MAKE PENTECOST HAPPEN AGAIN?

The answer absolutely is "No!" We are so self-confident in our age,

We think all we have to do is get in the right speaker— organize the right kind of rally— discipline ourselves, pray more— and we can have Pentecost again any time we want!

But that is all backwards! No one commands the Holy Spirit!

He is not a captive of any sect or denomination. The Spirit's coming is always of grace! He responds when believers believe Jesus' Promise, and obey His command to wait.

CAN YOU AND I, CAN WE COME TO THE PLACE WHERE PENTECOST COMES?

We have been pointing toward Pentecost for 13 weeks as we have been going through our Ashes to Fire series: Confessing... believing... repenting... in humility... obedience... in reaching out... in Christ-like love and anticipation... we have been pointing toward Pentecost!

We want to know what it means to be awakened by God's Spirit!

Whatever took place those ten days— we don't know— but human effort— even human prayer was not what brought the Spirit.

The Spirit's coming was all of grace.

It was attractive. It was powerful. It was also frightening, awesome, and wonderful beyond description.

It was the first mighty Awakening of the Holy Spirit.

It has been repeated over and over again, where God's people have come simply agreeing that they want God more than they want anything else!

When the church across the centuries has sought for God as more than a fire-escape, or more than a therapeutic convenience to enhance our life-style— when the church has given up its own selfish ways, God has been found!

In England one man had been seeking God's Spirit to witness with his own spirit that he was a child of God.

286 years ago a 35-year old Anglican priest opened his New Testament at five in the morning to the words: "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4,) and then saw the words "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

In the afternoon he went to Vespers at St. Paul's, and the anthem sung there was:

"Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O Let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If thou, Lord, wilt mark evil, O Lord, who can abide it? For there is mercy with thee; therefore shalt thou be feared... And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins."

And then in his journal that Anglican priest wrote these famous words: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

This was the Holy Spirit's enlightenment to John Wesley. In his own words: "before I had served with the faith of a servant— now I could serve as a son."

God used Wesley's dynamic energy, and his methodistic approach to life, and certainly Wesley's genius for organizing believers into small groups for accountability.

But it was not until Wesley saw that salvation was all of grace, and he surrendered even his ambition and considerable strength of will, that God brought powerful assurance, and the Wesleyan Revival began that saved Britain from untold loss.

And at the heart of Wesley's newfound Holy Spirit assurance was a spirit that called for unity and love as well as renewal and revival throughout the Church of Jesus Christ:

On Wesley's Day— Aldersgate Day, which is celebrated on the Sunday closest to May 24th, we might well ponder his words: John Wesley himself said: "By... a living faith... we labour to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world. ... But from real Christians, of whatsoever denomination they be, we earnestly desire not to be distinguished at all; not from any who sincerely follow after what they know they have not yet attained. ... Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thine? I ask no farther question. If it be, give me thy hand. For opinions, or terms, let us not destroy the work of God. Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough. I give thee the right hand of fellowship." ... (3)

Wesley came to the place where God could come on His terms, and the rest is history:

**CAN YOU AND I, CAN WE COME TO THE PLACE WHERE
PENTECOST COMES?**

Prayer

Lord, Bring us to the place where Pentecost can come! We do not pray for uniformity, O God. We do not expect to agree on so many things of life. But, O great Father, we hunger and thirst for YOU! We want to be Your dwelling place! We unite our hearts in asking for the Holy Spirit in His fullness— the Promise Jesus made, and the prayer for us He prayed.

This we ask in His name, who with You and the Holy Spirit reign forever and ever, One God, world without end. Amen

It is hard to grasp, but Jesus said that if we simply ask the Father, He will give us the Holy Spirit as the free gift of His grace. Jesus said that as imperfect and self-centered as we can be, if we enjoy giving good and necessary things to our children— then **HOW MUCH MORE WILL THE HEAVENLY FATHER GIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THOSE WHO ASK?** What would happen if we really believed that?