

Have you ever recognized you had gotten something TOTALLY Wrong? Been willing to fight, live or die, for what you knew to be right... Dismissed a friend, cut-off a relative... Argued and defended what had to be, what you took for granted... Only to learn we were wrong?

I went to Seminary for 3 years beginning in 1981 and went back to Seminary for another 3 years in 2001, except that in those tumultuous 20 years, our world had radically changed. What was more, Education had changed, recognizing that even when there was a majority opinion, great authority, there were always spurious others who did not fit the norm. So we could never absolutely prove anything! In classes I would regularly raise my hand with questions, seeking clarification, only to be told NO. The joke became, how many times in a single class can Lindsey be told he is wrong? Except, I had to keep trying. Because being told NO, being told I was wrong IS NOT THE POINT, OWNING THE ANSWERS THAT MAKE SENSE, IS!

I recall having to lead a class on a French Philosopher named Jacques Derrida. The difficulty was that his paper had originally been written in French and Derrida loved to play with the sound of words. The topic was DEFERENCE, to Defer to another, the willingness to let others go first or to win. Except the paper was about the DIFFERENCE that is made in our relationships, in the world, by DEFERENCE, which in a French accent both sound-like DEFFERANCE. I became totally confused, yet the professor was able to take all my wrongs, straightening this so everyone else understood. What do we do, when we come to recognize maybe we were wrong? I believe the DIFFERENCE made by DEFERING TO OTHERS is Pentecost!

Part of the confusion, belongs with our translation of the words of JESUS, that we have claimed Jesus said "the Holy Spirit would be OUR COMFORTER, OUR ADVOCATE." Truth be told, most of us are looking for GOD to be our COMFORTER, to tell us we were right, to save us, especially when we are doing something new or risky. When Pastors are Ordained, there is an important phrase we are given as a GREAT COMMISSION: "May you Comfort the Challenged and may you Challenge the Comfortable!" That is the role of the Holy Spirit: Our COMPANION & CHALLENGER. The GREEK Word PARACLETE is a compound word literally meaning "To Come Alongside Another", the Paraclete walks with us, regularly troubles us.

Do you remember when Children or Grandchildren were very small and they learned to ask the question "WHY?" Often having no clue what they were asking. "WHY" was just the perfect question for any circumstance; especially after an adult explained WHY, to ask again WHY? The underlying point is that the answers we know, are not what matter, but that just like the child, we question, seeking new relationship.

In the Old Testament PENTECOST was an Ancient Jewish Holiday, 50 days after the original Passover, when GOD set the Slaves free from Pharaoh and they crossed over the Red Sea. On that original 50<sup>th</sup> Day, GOD gave the people a precious gift, Moses went up Mount Sinai and returned with the 10 Commandments. This was not "O BOY, we get to have LAWS!" The 10 Commandments explained our relationship with GOD. No longer are you Egyptians, Israelites, Methodists, Episcopalians, Minnesotans, New Yorkers, Washingtonians; YOU BELONG TO GOD. 6,000 years later, under the occupation of the Roman Empire, the Jews at Jerusalem were celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Day, the gift of Commandments, that we belong to GOD.

All the Disciples were gathered in one place, the Upper Room. Since the Last Supper that was where they regularly gathered, most often with the understatement "FOR FEAR." This is the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of the Book of Acts, when already a great deal has happened. Jesus ascended to Heaven, the total number of believers has become about 120, Judas was replaced by Matthias rather than by Justus... So how many believers were gathered in the Upper Room, where they were all present? 12 or about 120?

Suddenly, they heard something "like the sound of a Mighty Wind." Maybe it sounded like the Wind... The word WIND in Hebrew also means SPIRIT, so possibly they heard "A FRESH SPIRIT". In many ways this is

one of the most important descriptions in all the Bible: Because at times we may all hear the same words, each in our own language, but not all hear and understand exactly the same meaning. The problem with Life, with Faith, with Following Jesus, is always asking "WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?" The question Why.

Our Church is currently faced with a wonderful problem. A circumstance different than our Church has ever faced before, different from what most Churches ever confront. There were some incredible people who were part of this Church, who in recent years ascended to be with GOD. These individuals were committed to this Church in life, each leaving a great deal of what they had in this world to the Church. You have heard mention of this before, but this is not about Money. What this circumstance is calling us, as the Church to question, is that: Rather than our Coming to Church for the forgiveness of our sins, to be fed, to listen as an audience, to be members, to have the joy of singing before this congregation; rather than all that, we SHIFT to question: What does it mean, that we are not here for what we receive, we are here to make a difference by deferring to others' lives.

That was what happened on the Day of Pentecost, those who had been Jesus' disciples, receiving wisdom and understanding from him, being healed of all kinds of problems, receiving his sacrifice, witnesses to his resurrection and ascension; suddenly were called instead of receiving, to share with others what faith means, what relationship with GOD calls us to do and to be.

This week, several of our Committees began formalizing their proposals, and interesting things happened. Questioning committing to something different than we do every year,

1. In a Retirement Community, are we committed to the education and faith formation of children?
2. Is our desire as Valley Presbyterian Church to build a school for girls, where there is no education; or is our desire to convert those worshipping GOD in a different religion, to our faith?
3. Do we trust those in underdeveloped war-ravaged parts of the world (in South Sudan, in Pakistan, in Mexico) to be trustworthy, to act with fidelity, or do we expect graft and laziness?
4. Do we create a Scholarship fund for our own families or for those unaffiliated, to receive an education for a trade?
5. We have been helping several homeless kids to stay in school, could we do more?
6. We provided Solar electricity to the Orphanage in Mexico, now that their needs are greater and Mexico has still not brought electricity to them, can we help them with a new power system?
7. If governments have not been able to solve immigration issues, can we help these people or not?
8. When other churches cannot afford a new roof, or a sound system, can we give them these?
9. Can we make the Shelter for Battered Women in Good Repair, or are we satisfied they are safe?
10. Do we need an entirely new Kitchen, or can we update and upgrade what we have?

Perhaps, it is not that we have been wrong, only that deferring/serving others, committing to others instead of ourselves, challenges all of the prejudices and preconceptions we never thought we had.