



JUNE 2019

What's Happening this June?

Vacation Bible School



Saturday, June 22nd

8:45-1 pm

- ✦ See Beth Anne Aheron for registration
- ✦ Visitors must fill out medical release forms
- ✦ Kids, bring a bathing suit or change of clothes and a towel

What's Next?

We are getting ready to celebrate the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church this June! The reality of God's constant presence with us through the Holy Spirit has profound impacts on the way we live in church. We are not just a civic organization or a social club. We are God's people set apart to do God's work of reconciliation among each other and in the community around us. This is our job and the Holy Spirit goes further by giving each of us unique gifts to serve.

But what does service look like? In a community like ours it can be difficult. For the most part, people take care of themselves. It's like the cartoon gags about the kids trying to help people across the street who don't want their help! And for the hands-on work there already seem to be good organizations in place, like Hands of God ministries. I've sat through five years' worth of missions and youth meetings and one of the constant questions that comes up is, "how can we serve?" Obviously, everyone wants money and Kallam Grove has been very generous, but that is different than service. To be the church we have to be engaged in some kind of work. Our call is to be working alongside our God towards the healing of a broken world, not to be waiting to die so we can escape a disappointing world.

So what will our work be? It does not have to be earth shattering. We will never be able to operate on the level of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, but we can find something to do; it will just take some imagination. And now back to the Holy Spirit!!!

We read about the arrival of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. When the Holy Spirit arrives the crowds are confused and Peter gives a speech to explain what is happening. Peter references the prophet Joel, who foresaw this gift.

"I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." Joel 2:28-29

The gift of the Holy Spirit is profound on so many levels – an encourager, a teacher, a helper, a reminder, a down-payment on what is to come – but there is another gift given here in Joel. God's people will have vision – sons and daughter will prophecy, old men will be given dreams and young men have visions. We need this at Kallam Grove right now as I sense we are feeling aimless again. We need imagination to figure out how to serve in Bethany and, by grace, imagination is one of the gifts both Joel and Peter anticipate coming with the Holy Spirit.

I do not know what our place is in Bethany, but it isn't just to be a country club. In this season of Pentecost let us begin to wonder, begin to dream, what possibilities there may be. If we want to work with God, God will give us a place. Let us pray for a vision, for dreams, that come to our congregation. I am the pastor, but I don't have any special claim on the Holy Spirit. The scripture is clear – all of God's children, young, old, men, women, even the slaves, will be given new sight. I pray you will get curious and the Holy Spirit will give us imagination. Kallam Grove is a good church full of good people. It's far past time that the rest of Bethany saw that for themselves.

FROM THE
MIND OF THE PASTOR
— REV. NATHANAEL PUTNAM —



– Pentecost –



We have been talking about Easter A LOT lately. I hope I haven't made you sick of it, because really there is no way to overstate the importance of the empty tomb. On the other hand, it is possible to get hung up on one subject to the neglect of others! It is partly out of this reality that we are given the grace of the church calendar. Through out the year we are given seasons and holidays that help us focus on different parts of God's plan for us. We are leaving Eastertide and heading towards Pentecost (June 9th), when God sent the Holy Spirit and the church was born.

One of the things I have tried to do this Lent and Easter is to help frame Jesus' death and resurrection in a larger story. I am still convinced that most Christian teaching today is in error, or at least dangerously small minded, about what God is up to in this world. Most of what I hear in music, sermons, Sunday school classes, small groups, and books is that Jesus died for me so I don't have to go to hell anymore. This is true, but it leaves us totally ignorant of the larger plan God has.

God's vision for creation is given in the Old Testament through the prophets. God will renew this creation that is broken by sin and subject to death. God will do this through God's special family, the Children of Abraham. God promised that all nations will come under the control of the king of the Children of Abraham, who will be just and righteous just as God is just and righteous. In the time that God's king comes to power peace will be established not only between all people, but also with nature. In a new creation there will no longer be sickness or death. Finally, God promised that this new world will be open to *all* people who have been faithful and obedient to him. Those who have died before its coming will be raised to new life and given a new body that will never perish. This is the age to come and it is where the creator is taking all creation.

Good Friday fits in this story. Jesus' willing self-sacrifice paid the debt left by our bent to sin. Through Jesus' broken body God reconciled with all of creation. And Easter fits in this story too – Jesus is the beginning of the new creation! He is proof that the prophets heard God correctly. Finally, because of his death, God gave Jesus the rightful title, King of the Children of Abraham and all the rest of creation. Jesus is a son of Adam born into brokenness, a son of Abraham belonging to God's fixing family, a son of David born to rule as king, and the son of God who does God's will and sits at God's

right hand. All of this comes into view at Easter, when Jesus died and God raised him from the dead. The Age to come is already coming and we live in two ages now!

But we are not focusing on Easter anymore. We are moving on to the arrival of the Holy Spirit – Pentecost. But it fits into this big story too! We know, I hope, the visions God gives the prophets of a suffering servant who will pay for sins and a coming king who will usher in God’s kingdom (another word for heaven). We see those in Jesus. But there is another sign given in the prophets that God’s kingdom is arriving and it comes to us in the second chapter of Joel. Joel is concerned with the Day of the LORD – the time that God returns to fix what is broken and restore creation through the Children of Israel. This is what God promises – in that day, “then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God and that there is no other. Never again will my people be shamed. And afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions. Even on the slaves, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days...and everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” (Joel 2:27-32)

There are many things to be said about the Holy Spirit. It helps us, intercedes for us, encourages us, reminds us of Jesus’ teaching, empowers us to do God’s will, empowers us to work in the church, is literally God dwelling inside us! But my favorite thing about the Holy Spirit is what it points us to – God’s future. Paul calls the Holy Spirit *a down payment* on the good things God has promised. So much of our hope as Christians is tied up in the future. Our faith is the ultimate in delayed gratification. It is excruciating (which comes from the word for cross and crucifixion) to watch the world and try to live as Jesus calls me to. I watch with disgust and horror at the way people treat one another and all the while I am inwardly jealous of the bounty they collect for making everything around them miserable. I want wealth and power and influence and I mourn not having them, but I also despise the means necessary to acquire them. Most of the time I am miserable. But I endure for the hope of what is to come; justice for the oppressed, punishment for oppressors, and deep *shalom* for me. I confess I often have doubts. Is it true that God is greater than nature and the laws of nature? Or am I a weak fool who deserves to be eaten because I cannot eat? Is God’s future real?

It is in these times that I cling to the down payments with all my life. Jesus is called by Paul and the writer of Hebrews the firstborn. Paul calls him the first fruits. Jesus is a down payment – a demo model for what God promises to all of us. He is the first human to be raised to new life and to dwell in God’s perfect kingdom. Again, Easter is soooo important. But Jesus isn’t the only sign that God’s future is true. The Holy Spirit, given at Pentecost and living in each of us who have given ourselves to Jesus, is also a sign that God’s future is real. Peter uses the scripture of Joel to prove just that in Acts 2. The servant, the king, and the arrival of the Holy Spirit are all signs that God is moving and that the promises of old are trustworthy.

So in this season of Pentecost I hope you find encouragement to keep following Jesus and the strength to reject the ways of this world even when they promise great reward. It is easy to have good feelings about Jesus and easy to want to avoid Hell, but it is hard, very hard, to refuse using other people for our own profit, whether it be through gossip, slander, sexual gratification, or greed. The Spirit teaches us these things are wrong, however widespread and pleasant they can be for us, and in its very teaching the Spirit reminds us it is real and alive – sent by God as the first movement towards his good end. If you feel the Spirit then you know the promise was true, and if part of the story is true, then it all has to be true. Yes, our hope is in things unseen, but it is a living hope. We haven’t seen our own resurrections yet, or God’s new creation, but we feel the murmurs and we see the evidences that make it alive and real. May you know the Spirit that is inside you now in this Pentecost season and by that may you know the riches and inheritance you are called to and the mighty power God has to use for you – that very same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Christ is risen indeed!