

FROM JERUSALEM TO NEW CANAAN

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Pentecost

Happy Feast of Pentecost. Today we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, the birthday of the Church, and the streams of living water that flow out of all believer's hearts.

The Collect

I love the collect of the day. It notes that "the way of eternal life" has been opened "to every race and nation by the gift of the Holy Spirit." The petition is great: "Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth."

Jerusalem to New Canaan

This morning I would like to give you a whirlwind tour of the winds of the Holy Spirit showing how the streams of living water brought the Church from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth and even unto New Canaan.

The Holy Spirit that inspired that first Pentecostal church in Jerusalem 2000 years ago is the same Holy Spirit that inspired St. Mark's 247 years ago and inspires us today.

The whirlwind tour includes a few of the greatest hits of the Holy Spirit as it is manifested people who had particular impact of the Church. Fasten your seat belt.

The Gospel

It begins with Jesus. Jesus is very clear John's Gospel: The Holy Spirit cannot come until he

has died, been resurrected, and gone to the Father in heaven. Only then, when he is not physically present, can he send his Holy Spirit and be spiritually present to everyone everywhere. This is why he tells his disciples that it is good for him to go away.

In the Beginning

The Holy Spirit came on the **Day of Pentecost** in the city of Jerusalem. It blew into the Upper Room and flowed through the disciples, manifesting itself as tongues of fire. It flowed through Peter's first sermon, and through the 3,000 converted on that day.

The New Testament Churches

It flowed through the churches the Apostles founded and left behind.

A river of living water flowed through **St. Paul** and around the Mediterranean into **Gentile Churches** in places like Corinth, Galatia, and Ephesus and into the **Seven Churches in Asia Minor** that are addressed in the Book of Revelation.

The Expanding Church

Persecution in Jerusalem and Rome could not stop the Holy Spirit and the ever expanding Church. It flowed into Northern Africa where the wealthy **Perpetua** became a Christian sister to the slave **Felicity**.

It flowed into Egypt, into Alexandria, and Constantinople, into areas that would

eventually become **Eastern Orthodox Churches**.

In the 200's it flowed into the desert, into the heart of **St. Anthony**, and into the lives of the **desert fathers and mothers**, who are the forbearers and founders of much of our spiritual tradition.

After the conversion of Emperor **Constantine** in 330, the Holy Spirit flowed and the Church expanded throughout the Roman Empire. In the 370's, it flowed through **Ambrose of Milan** who was baptized, ordained a Deacon, ordained a Priest, and consecrated a Bishop all within a week.

In the 400's, the mystic waters flowed east and west and north, through the genius of **St. Augustine**, the prayerful teachings of **Dionysius the Areopagite**, and all the way to Ireland, the proverbial end of the earth at that time, through missionary ministry of **St. Patrick**.

Around 500, it flowed through **St. Benedict** whose rule became the foundation for monastic communities and the Book of Common Prayer.

Around 600, it flowed through **Pope Gregory the Great**, the father of the Gregorian chant. In 597, through the direction of the Pope, the Holy Spirit flowed again to the far-off shores of England in a little boat carrying **Augustine of Canterbury**. 100 years later, **The Venerable Bede** wrote a version of the Acts of Apostles for the English people.

The flow of the Gospel continued East over the **Russian** steppe and into faraway places; places that produced the beauty of **Byzantium**, icons, holy pictures that are themselves inspired by and inspiring of the streams of living water.

Middle Ages

In the **mystic middle ages**, the streams of living water burst forth. **Benedictine monasteries** covered the landscape.

By 1200 **Francis of Assisi** drank deeply of living waters and, drunk with the Divine, was converted from a spoiled rich kid to a traveling troubadour of divine love inspiring a new order of friars who inspired a reawakening of the church in Europe.

Books

The streams of living water left their water marks on some great books, like the *Summa Theologica* that flowed through the genius of **Thomas Aquinas**. **Julian of Norwich's** visions continue to inspire us today. **Mary Kempe**, a woman with 13 kids, wrote of her passionate devotion to Jesus. **Thomas a Kempis** wrote **The Imitation of Christ**, the second all-time bestseller after the Bible.

Renaissance and Reformation

By 1500, the world was changing. The Middle Ages were over. Renaissance and Reformation were on the way.

Catherine of Sienna, emerged from three years of prayer in her basement to become one of the most holy and powerful people in all Europe.

Ignatius of Loyola, **Teresa of Avila**, and **John of the Cross** led communities and wrote of prayer with the passion of a lover and mind of a scientist.

Reformation

Then in 1517 **Martin Luther** unleashed a torrent of the Holy Spirit with his *95 Theses*. Like the great Mississippi River, the streams of living water overran their banks.

Like an Arab Spring, the Holy Spirit emerged from and for the common lay people of the earth. It burst forth through a lay spirituality that is common today. In 1549, the first

edition of **The Book of Common Prayer** was published, inspired greatly by the poetry and genius of **Archbishop Thomas Cranmer**. In 1611 the **King James Bible** was published. The scriptures could be heard in English. This year is the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible.

By the 1700's **John Wesley's** heart was strangely warmed and he and his brother Charles ignited the Methodist movement.

The living streams of divine love burst into music. **Johann Sebastian Bach** wrote sublime beauties like *Jesu, joy of man's desiring*. **Charles Wesley** wrote hymns daily, and **John Newton** was converted from slave trader to priest and authored his and all of our stories in the words **Amazing Grace**.

Expanding to the New World

The streams of Living Water crossed the ocean and came to the new world and beyond. Spanish, Moravians, Dutch, English, Russian, French, Portuguese hit the high and holy seas.

Pilgrims, Puritans, Anglicans, Unitarians, Quakers, Shakers, Non-Conformists, and Roman Catholics came to the East coast of the United States. There was the first **Great Awakening** in the United States between roughly 1730 and 1760. It started in North Hampton, Massachusetts with the fire and brimstone preaching of **Jonathan Edwards**.

New Canaan

During this time to streams of living water flowed into New Canaan. **The Congregational Church** was established in 1733. The streams of living water flowed up Oenoke Ridge and **St. Mark's Church** had its beginnings, as land on West Road was deeded to it on July 18, 1764. The man's name was James Hait. He is the first name under

"Major Gifts" in the Donor Recognition Center.

Following the Revolutionary War and a trip to Scotland by **Samuel Seabury** to get consecrated a Bishop, **The Episcopal Church** was established in 1789 in Philadelphia. Two years later in 1791 "**the Episcopal church in New Canaan**" was organized. A **Second Great Awakening** began in 1800 and at its tail end **St. Mark's** moved to **God's acre** in 1833 so that it could be closer to town. It built the building that now houses St. Michael's Lutheran Church. We celebrated the 175th Anniversary of its consecration two years ago.

The Ends of the Earth

During the early 1800's England was enjoying a great awakening of its own which manifested itself with the rise of **Evangelicals, the Salvation Army, and the Anglo-Catholic Oxford movement**.

This led to awakening to social sin and injustice. In England **William Wilberforce** took on abolition of slavery in the name of Christ. Here in the United States, Harriet **Beecher Stowe** and **Abraham Lincoln** and the suffering spirituals of **Sojourner Truth** were inspired by the Gospel.

Missionary Societies were the rage and missionaries were sent to the ends of the earth – everywhere where the Gospel was not, particularly to Africa.

There was a **Third Great Awakening** in the United States between 1890 and 1910. In 1906 **The Azusa Street Revival** in Los Angeles gave birth of the modern Pentecostal Church.

The **Social Gospel** movement also surged and soup kitchens became holy places for hurting people, not only a place to eat but also to drink of the streams of living water.

In the 1930's, **A.A.** began and became a way and place for people to abstain from spirits and to drink more deeply from the Spirit of God. The 1940's brought World War and the life and example of **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** as a stand-up Christian.

St. Mark's

In the 1950's, at **St. Mark's** the little church on down the hill was too small a pond for all the streams of living water pouring into the congregation. In 1961, fifty years ago this coming October 8, St. Mark's moved up the hill from God's acre to 13 acres on Oenoke Ridge to make a bigger spiritual pond.

The 1960's brought tumult and social change. **Martin Luther King** and the leaders of the **Civil Rights Movement** drink deeply from the streams of living water in order to stand up to the fire hoses used to try to push them back.

Spiritual waters were stirred by **Pope John the XXIII** and **Vatican II**; by the monk **Thomas Merton**, by the liberation theologian and martyr **Archbishop Oscar Romero**, by the preacher **Billy Graham**, by the servant **Mother Teresa of Calcutta**, and by the liberating light of Anglican **Archbishop Desmond Tutu**.

Today at St. Mark's

That stream of living water that flowed through the hearts of the faithful for 2,000 years continues to flow into St. Mark's. It flows into the **font** this morning into the hearts of Adam, Sophia, and Tyler, who are about to be baptized.

It flows through all **those who are joining our parish this morning**. They are bringing their streams of living water and helping to make St. Mark's a river of living water, a place spiritual refreshment and renewal.

Conclusion

There is a great line in the Letter to the Hebrews: "Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow."

The same can be said for the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

The Holy Spirit that came to the disciples in the Upper Room comes to us today. The Holy Spirit that converted 3,000 on that first day still converts us today and the streams of living water that the saints drank from are the same streams of living water that flow from our hearts today.

Amen.