

Holy Agitation

Scripture: Luke 23:13 – 25 & Acts 2:37 – 41

Message for Pentecost 5/31/20

On this Pentecost Sunday, let us first look at Pilate's interaction with the crowd when Jesus was put before him for trial.

Three times Pilate asks the crowd – *Are you sure you want to crucify him?* Pilate even offers up an alternative to crucifixion. Pilate asks the crowd – *How about I let him off with a flogging?* Three times Pilate tried to get Jesus off with a good beating and not death by crucifixion.

Pilate's wife respected Jesus as a man of God and a good, holy man. She even asked her husband, Pilate, to do something that would let Jesus live. Pilate was under some pressure from Rome to keep things calm in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, so maybe it would be better for him to kill Jesus.

Oh, Pilate tried and tried to get Jesus a lesser punishment but the crowd said NO! Pilate finally washed his hands of the matter and did what the crowd demanded so that he could keep his job!

The crowd thundered back at Pilate every time he tried to give Jesus a lesser sentence – No, crucify Him! In fact, the longer this exchange between Pilate and the crowd continued, the more the crowd became certain of their response – Crucify Him! In fact, in one translation it says that the crowd finally shouted Pilate down. The crowd shouted that Jesus was a dangerous man. The crowd shouted that Jesus was a disturber of the peace. They shouted that Jesus was stirring the people up with his teachings. They shouted down Pilate – Crucify Him, Crucify Him!

In some ways the crowd was right, Jesus did stir up the people, but is that a capital offense? Teaching the people about God's love, is that a capital offense? Preaching about love and compassion, is that a capital offense?

Christ was a holy agitator!

Today we celebrate Pentecost. Today we celebrate the great whoosh of the Holy Spirit that ordained and transformed a ragtag band of Christ's followers into ambassadors for Christ. Today we remember the birthday of the church.

In our passage from the book of Acts we have Peter preaching to the people about Jesus who healed people, performed miracles, cast out demons, and raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus stirred up the people and Peter stirred up the people also. The people in our passage are saying this about Peter's message – *This is powerful stuff! Praise Jesus and Peter for stirring up the people!*

Peter stirred up the people in his day and on this Pentecost day, I hope we can be stirred up today. I hope you the people are saying – This is powerful stuff! Praise Jesus Christ and Peter for stirring things up!

(Ring bell after each name and years of service)

Praise the past ministers of the BBCC (DOC) for stirring things up here: Rev. James Crouch (1998 – 1999), Rev. Susan Spurgen (1999 – 2001), Rev. Harvey Sturgis (2001 – 2003), Rev. Dr. Sir Walter Scott (2004 – 2006), Rev. Dr. W. Chris Hobgood (2006 – 2017), Rev. Dr. Rusty Hesse Jr. (2017 – 2019), Rev. Pete Mauer (2019), and me (2020 - ??)

The power that stirs up the church is the very same power that got Jesus killed! The power that we use to praise God for his blessings in our lives is the same power that got most of the disciples martyred.

I think we all want to be stirred up! We want to get excited! But we do not want to be stirred up and killed. But we do not want to get so excited that we are martyred. Being stirred up puts things into motion. Being stirred up means we have to take an honest look at our lives. Being stirred up is a good thing with consequences. Being stirred up might even mean we have to change our ways.

A washing machine has an agitator within it, to get your cloths clean, your cloths need to be agitated. For us to become clean, we must be agitated by the Holy Agitator – the Holy Spirit!

Pentecost is a day of 'Holy Agitation'! Pentecost is the day that stirs up the church. Do we want to be stirred up? Do we want to be put into motion? Do we want to get excited? Remember there are consequences!

OK, let us be honest with ourselves – do we want holy agitation? Look at our shared ministry – do we want holy agitation? Look at our fellowship – do we want to be stirred up? Do we want the Holy Spirit to become the Holy Agitator?

Today at the end of our service we will have two couples come forward to become members of the BBCC (DOC). They wish to join us as we stir things up for Jesus Christ

Let us pray:

Agitating God, stir us up. Inspire us to serve you better. Help us let go of the ways it has always been so that we can glimpse the way it still can be.

Holy Spirit, the Agitating Spirit, stir us up. Lead us so that we may serve Christ better. Help us envision new forms of ministry so that we may bring more people into the church.

AMEN.