

Summerland United Church
May 19th Pentecost Sunday
Resurrection Stories: Transformed

Threshold The Spirit is alive and moves among us as it did in the early church! We come to the end of our series, “Resurrection Stories,” in which we have celebrated that new life is possible, that transformation can happen no matter how dead we have felt inside or how difficult our circumstances might be. Today we will commit ourselves to some important and concrete goals for our mission in the world. We are a church called to mobilize to alleviate suffering and proclaim resurrection hope through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Scripture: *Acts 2: 1-21*

Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth metaphor or story, listen for the meaning they hold for you on this day.

When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were blown away. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, “Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues? “They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!” Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: “What's going on here?” Others joked, “They're drunk on cheap wine.” That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: “Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk—it's only nine o'clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen:

“In the Last Days,” God says, I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters; Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams. When the time comes, I'll pour out my Spirit On those who serve me, men and women both, and they'll prophesy.

Peter said many more words to the crowd – to all those people who spoke different languages. He told them about Jesus and the promise of the Holy Spirit. The people listened carefully and 3000 people that day joined the followers of Jesus.

One: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection: Transformed

I've been feeling a little disjointed and a little overwhelmed emotionally this week. You know when you have those days, or sometimes weeks where it just feels like everything all at once is happening? And when I speak about being emotionally overwhelmed, it's not from anything bad, rather it's from a number of exceptionally good things happening this week.

When I spoke to my supervisor about how emotional I've been getting this week he made a comment that I've been pondering. He said, well you know you're sort of in this liminal in-between space right now. You've graduated, but your not ordained, your moving your community of faith, but not yet. And these times can be a strain, as you sit in the tension of now and not yet.

That tension can make us emotional, stressed, anxious, fearful – and generally not our best selves. We're excited and we're nervous. We're grieving and looking forward to what's next.

Which I think must be how the disciples felt for all those long days after Jesus death, and even for a period of time afterwards. Today we read the Pentecost story which seems the culmination of all that we've been waiting for over these weeks since Easter.

The birth of the new Church, the Holy Spirit descends upon them and us and we're revitalized, energized, transformed! But were they really? Did the attendees at that first new church experience go home later and continue to feel revitalized, energized, transformed?

Yes. I'm sure some of them did. But I expect a few, after getting home and maybe after a night's rest and then woke up and said to themselves. *Well, that was cool, but now what?*

How did they, and honestly more importantly – how do we hold on to the transformation offered to us on this day as we continue to sit in this liminal now and not yet space? And then maintain it until we get to the other side of letting go and moving?

Here's where you're getting all ready to hear some great awesome biblically inspired meaningful answer from me, huh?

Ok. Here is it is. Are you ready?

Yeah, I don't know. I'm not entirely sure how we will do that. But what I do know and honestly believe with all my heart is that we'll figure it out.

And I know this, because as I look back over the history of this church, and just want I've seen from my year and a half here. No one in this place lets – I don't know stop them. They just turn around and say, but I'll figure it out. Or, do you know? Do you know someone who knows?

We say – this is what we want to do, even when it's a thing no one in this community has done before – so we'll figure out how to do it. And that's how transformation happens.

My guess is, that the morning after Pentecost there were a lot of people scratching their heads – with *the so now what? Or what's next? And how on earth are we going to make this work?* Questions in their brains. And the reality is it still took them awhile to figure it out. The letters of Paul, the earliest writings we have on the new church are full of people trying to figure out how to live in community together.

And these were groups of people who were suddenly thrust together into community from all walks of life – poor and rich. Master and servant, men and women and children all being treated as equals. And that was super hard to figure out. And Paul, he had some ideas, he had some wisdom, but he didn't always get it right either. But he tried, he never gave up. He was determined to make it work.

I think transformation happens slowly. We like the eureka moments and the climax of movies and stories where everything is suddenly as it should be – perfect. But that's never been my life experience. Rather it's more like the life cycles we've talked about over the Easter Season – seeds planted that grow slowly over many months, which bring forth seeds when the plants die, so from that ending something new can grow.

It's a slow measured process with each element of transformation happening in its own time. It can't, and shouldn't be rushed, but savored as one savors their dark rich garden beds after seeds have been planted. There's nothing there yet, just what appears to be lifeless soil. But we see more than that – we see what will grow, what can grow with tending and nourishment – which shifts and changes over the seasons.

We're ending our resurrection stories this week and next week well begin our summer series – Tending the New Creation.

We were invited, during the weeks of Easter to consider what we need to unlock, to experience our own resurrection story. For some of us those stories have unlocked and are flourishing, for others, the seeds are still dormant or germinating in the ground. We grow at our own pace, and this is not to be rushed.

So we will take care to tend ourselves and tend our community in the way it needs, depending on it's season. We will share the spiritual nourishment of scripture and our faith, so we can grow in our own time. We will give ourselves permission to live in this liminal space of now and not yet and all that means, and we will care for one another as we do so.

As I was reflecting on this concept of being in an in-between place and how emotional I've been this week. I was reminded of a meme I've seen around the internet. It's an image of a caterpillar, cocoon and butterfly – a worldwide symbol of transformation. One that helps us to understand our Easter story, as the caterpillar cocoons itself, entombs itself and then emerges as something miraculously different. A powerful image.

But the meme I was thinking about this week, had a little bit of added information saying:

