



## **“Unleashed”**

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### **Scripture (NRSV):**

#### **Acts 2:1-21**

**2** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. **3** Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

**5** Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” **12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” **13** But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

**14** But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. **15** Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. **16** No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

**17** ‘In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

**18** Even upon my slaves, both men and women,

in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.  
<sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.  
<sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.  
<sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

### **Sermon:**

It was a pretty little storm last night.  
A little lightning, a little thunder, rain. Gusty winds that made the trees wave ecstatically.

But it was nothing like a summer storm on the Great Plains. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma.

Three hundred lightning strikes in one storm. Everything goes dark. And before it goes dark, the sky is almost green, the clouds look malevolent, so fiercely piled up in staggering waves of water and heat and cold and electricity. Clouds, thousands of feet high.

Thousands of feet wide.

Dark as night.

Bright as fireworks searing your eyeballs.

And it's dangerous. So so dangerous.

If you want to "enjoy" a storm on the Plains. Take cover first. Have flashlights, and food and water, for that moment when the transformers blow, or are blown over.

Stay low. Lightning strikes whatever is standing up. A tree, a cow, a person.

Hold on to each other. You will need someone to grab when you jump!.

When it's over, you breathe a sigh of relief. And, you are astounded, dumbfounded at the immensity of the power.

And that is just one storm. The summer has many more in store.

I believe the first Pentecost was like a summer storm on the Plains. It was wild, and it was powerful.

It burst open the followers of Jesus, and they were hot and bright and even a little scary to those around them.

People were either shocked and confused, or scornful at this change. Drunk indeed!

Who bursts through the barriers of culture and language, race and religion?

Only God.

And God followers.

Who can put an end to the distrust, the misunderstanding, the disdain, and even hate, that warps our souls? Then, and now?

God can.

And God followers can.

Just about the moment when you think there is too much darkness, too much hate, too many murders like the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Aubery, Breonna Taylor that make you rage, and then weep, ... then God unleashes Pentecost. A storm, a fire, a dark sun, a moon of blood.

The people of Pentecost spoke up, stood up within the throngs, could not be silenced, would not be silenced.

They changed their world, and it is up to us to change ours.

- To call out the sin of racism and white privilege.
- To end the killing war on black and brown people, waged by white power.
- To not sit down, not be silent, not be afraid, but shout out against evil, demand justice, proclaim the vision of God.

Because we dream God's dream, our children have visions of a better world, and they prophesy a new day, they shout out for a world of justice and peace.

The officers of the United Church of Christ have written about the torment that is writhing through our nation...this is what they say:

*“As we enter this season of Pentecost we are reminded that the breath of God still blows where she wills, the fire of Gods righteousness still burns within those who believe, the power of God still emboldens us to tear down every stronghold, and the will of God still reigns supreme.*

*In the strength of that power we must be compelled to:*

*Speak up.*

*Stand up.*

*Show up.*

*In Minneapolis. In Brunswick, in Louisville, in New York, in Ferguson, in Cleveland, in Baltimore, in Chicago, and in every city across the land.*

*Somehow we must garner the strength to call out this evil. We must bolster the courage to face this head on and call it by name. Only when we choose to face the evil can we cast it from our collective being. This is the work of the entire church.*

*We are called to uproot white supremacy in all of its forms. Whiteness must no longer be our god.*

*Justice was lynched in America yesterday.*

*But thanks be to God, Justice refuses to die.”*

Dear people of Westminster,

A storm on the Great Plains in August can be terrifying, can be destructive, can change the landscape and the lives of the people who live there.

Pentecost is a great storm.

And we are reminded that it can feel terrifying, and it can tear down old worlds and old patterns, change the lives of people who are caught up in that great Pentecost storm...

That Pentecost storm tells us, the old deeply embedded pattern of evil that is racism in America, has got to go.

There is no place for it in the prophetic utterance of Joel, in the vision of the world that God shares with us, made clear to us through Jesus.

Speak up. Stand up. Show up.

Here in our town. Here in our nation. Speak up. Stand up. Show up. In Pentecost power.

For our world. For our children and grandchildren, who prophesy and have visions of a world so much better than what we see right now. Unleash your power. Amen.