

The Day of Pentecost  
May 31, 2009  
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I know I have told you that each time I walk a newly baptized child around the church; I wind up taking them up to the altar to have a little “chat.” In that brief time we have together, I tell the child two things. First, I remind them that God loves them and that God intended for them to be a part of His creation and that without them, creation would be incomplete. I know that this concept is hard for the infant to grasp, but I tell them nonetheless. When our two girls were *in utero*, I would talk to them through Debby’s stomach each night and I would say the same two things to them each time. I would say, “Wash the car,” and “Do your homework.” All I can say is, “so far so good.”

So when I talk with each newly baptized child, and remind them that they are an integral part of God’s whole creation, I hope that it will stick as did the advice I gave my children. The other thing I tell each child is to take care of their mom and dad, to love them and respect them and to grow in the image of God that came from them. If they have siblings, I simply tell them to do the best they can given the circumstances.

This morning at 8:30 when I baptized Alexander Todd Giovanazzo, grandson of Marje and the late Tom Barney, that’s what I told him. So far so good, it’s only two hours later.

I had this conversation long ago with Jimmy Kryszczuk, and Abigail Hunt. Amanda Wright, Brian Roberts and Lydia Webb were either older or not baptized by me but I know that though they didn’t hear it from me, it still applies. Each of you is a unique gift from God, and each of you has a unique place in God’s creation and God has plans for you. And being that integral part of creation makes you indispensable, indispensable in that everything that has happened in the world from the moment you were born until now has included you and believe it or not, you have had an impact on everything that has happened. That’s an awesome thought, you know, and it makes each of us, something without which the world cannot exist.

That thought isn’t meant to give us a swelled head or a greater sense of self than we deserve, but it **is** there to make us take ownership of the responsibility each of us has from God, to make a difference in the world and to the rest of creation.

We are presented with this challenge every day of our lives. When we wake up each morning, we have a choice to make with regards to how the day is going to go for us. Now, if it is true that each of us affects the rest of creation, then it follows that the rest of creation can and will make certain impacts and demands on us with each new day. Much of what happens to us is what happens to us, but we should never fall into the trap that fatalism holds for us by thinking that we have NO say in what happens to us, because we do. You choose to make of the day what the day presents to you, and each day holds infinite possibility. To say otherwise is the worst kind of idolatry, where idolatry is when we try to put God in a box, so that we can manipulate and direct God’s power. To say we can’t do something, or that something isn’t possible for us to accomplish is to say that God can do that with us or through us, and that’s just not so.

On that first Pentecost, when all the faithful gathered and were breathed upon and infused with God's Holy Spirit, it was reported that the impossible happened, that even though there were gathered in that room people and folk of every description and origin, with multiple languages and traditions represented there, when they spoke the language God gave them to speak, everyone understood, and each mind comprehended. And there were some there, as there are now and everywhere in every age and time, who refused to acknowledge that God can do what God wills to do with and through us, and who said, "this is not possible, this gibberish is just alcohol talking." But Scripture records that Peter stood up at that very moment and said, "No, it is not as you suppose, something very different is happening here than what your life's experience has told you can happen, what's happening here is God making possible that which we previously thought impossible."

The first lesson you just heard read from Ezekiel, tells the same story in a different time. The prophet speaks of his vision of a valley of dry bones. And we all know where bones come from. We've eaten enough chicken wings across the street to know that once the bones are laid on the table, the meat is gone, and so is the possibility of raising to life once again, the chicken from which they came. Once the bones are laid bare, the creature is dead. But in this vision, God told Ezekiel to speak to the bones and to tell them that they shall live again. And so Ezekiel, faithful to the Lord, spoke the Word of the Lord to the bones, and in one of the best passages of Scripture ever written, the prophet tells the story of how God brought the lifeless bones back to life. And when, in the vision the great multitude, stood before him once again, alive and breathing and standing tall, God said to Ezekiel, "Don't ever let me hear you say again,

- that you can't do something,
- or that the people of Israel have lost their hope,
- that death is all that is left, that life is not worth living,
- that my problems are too big to face,
- that my child too far gone, that you can't kick that habit,
- that you can't find love again,
- that you'll never find a job,
- that the economy will never recover,
- that peace will never come to the middle east,
- that public education is beyond repair,
- that I'll never get into college, I'll never finish that degree, I'll never feel well again, or whole again, or free again, or happy again."

God reminds us, again and again, that that need not be so, because with God all things are possible. If the resurrection of Christ tells us anything at all, it tells us this, just when you thought the impossible could never happen, God surprises us, one more time.

God is with us, always, rooting for us, cheering us on, hoping we take that next step with courage, confident in the knowledge that God means us well, and that we will do well. And that if perchance some days you don't, if by chance the step you take finds you stepping into a deep hole, or that puddle had more water in it than you thought it would, or that you had to adjust your plans because someone else did something that changed the look of and the bend in the road upon which you were traveling, know that God is there still, sorry with you that you got wet, or sick, hurt, or discouraged.

If you take anything at all from your confirmation day, my dear friends, take this thought with you today. That you and God make an unbeatable team, from the day you were born, you were part of God's plan for His creation, that YOU were the one upon whom He would rely to make great things happen.

I told that to many of you long ago. It still holds true, for all of us.

Amen.