**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**

**Watertown, WI**

 **“Suddenly”**

Pastor Aaron Reseburg

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*Acts 2:1-21*

Fire changes things. It can make a cold room into a warm and comfy space. It changes a dark and mysterious clearing in the forest into a welcoming camp site. It can take an inedible part of a cow and change it into a delicious steak. It can change a mighty forest into a prairie. It can change a happy home into a pile of useless rubble. Fire changes things.

Fire is one of the most common tools that God uses in the Bible. Personally, I think of water as the primary tool that God uses, but fire is right up there. God uses fire to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He instructs His followers to make burnt offerings, He speaks through a burning bush in the wilderness to call Moses, He leads the Israelites with a pillar of fire, and God sends fire down from heaven to consume the sacrifices of Elijah along with the pagan priests, just to name a few. The Lord’s anger and His vengeance are over and over again compared to fire. 1 Peter 3:10 even tells us that on the day of the Lord, God will use fire to purify the earth.

Fire changes things, and in our reading for today, the disciples are also changed by fire. Or rather, I should say that fire is the outward sign of change that God has made inside of them. It’s interesting to note that fire isn’t actually a thing in and of itself; it is a sign of other changes that are going on in the atomic structure of the thing itself.

In the same way, the fire that descends to the disciples doesn’t change them, the Holy Spirit is who changes them. That’s what the Holy Spirit does; He is a lot like fire, He changes things. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit gives people superhuman Strength, shows people the future, inspires prophecy, gives intelligence, guidance, and many other things.

In our text, the disciples change. Jesus spent three years teaching the disciples, and then He re-taught them everything for 40 days after His resurrection. Yet, even at the ascension, it seems like the disciples are still confused. He tells them to wait in Jerusalem until they are clothed with the spirit, until the change is complete.

On Pentecost, the Spirit ties it all together for the disciples, He gives them the words to say. He takes fishermen, tax collectors, and any other number of people and changes them into witnesses. Not only does He give them the words to say, but He gives them languages to speak them in. He has them speak in different languages to prove to them and everyone who hears them that the words are not their own; they are not speaking vain words or anything from their own hearts. The Holy Spirit is speaking through them.

Just as God spoke through the burning bush, the fire shows God’s presence in the disciples. God’s presence, His home, and His dwelling place is no longer in the temple. The temple has been expanded; His people will now be His temple. No longer will He limit His speech to a few chosen prophets. Now, all His followers will be His prophets; they will all spread His message to the nations.

God has made all Christians His dwelling place. In Holy Baptism, you have become the dwelling place of the Lord; you are His Holy Temple. Not only that, but you are His royal priest; we are all a part of the priesthood of all believers. You are not a part of the public office of the Holy Ministry, you are not a pastor, but that doesn’t mean that you are not a mouthpiece of God.

We all have different vocations that God has given us in our lives, and the fire of Holy Spirit changes how we live in those vocations. How we speak God’s Word is different in each of our vocations. I speak God’s Word differently to my own children than I do to the children in our school and in our church. I speak God’s Word differently to my wife than I do to you all from the pulpit.

A pastor stands in the office of the public ministry. What I say to you is regulated not only by God’s Word but also by the Lutheran Confessions. God Himself has called me into this office to speak to you in this way. God Himself has called you to be a mother or a father, a brother or sister, an uncle or aunt, a grandfather or grandmother, a neighbor or whatever your job is. God gives you chances to speak His Word in every aspect of your life.

Most of the time, when you speak God’s Word to each other in your daily life it has a much bigger effect on someone’s life than the words of a sermon. You forgiving your son or daughter or spouse, you sharing a word of comfort to a grieving neighbor or friend, you sharing a Bible verse with a struggling co-worker, you sharing the love of God with someone you see every day can create change.

We have been given the Spirit in the waters of Holy Baptism, but we are people of fire. God will use you to create change. God didn’t use fire to change the hearts of those who heard the disciples, He used words. He used His own words, put into the mouths of the disciples.

If you immerse yourself in Scripture, if you spend time in His word, He will put His words in your mouth as well. His Word changed your heart, and it took away your sins when His Word took on flesh and died on the cross. His word is like fire; it changes things, it changes hearts, it can change your family, it can change Watertown, it can change our country. One day, His Word, Jesus Christ, will return and will change this world forever. Sin, death, and the devil will all be consumed by the fire, and we will enter into a new and changed world.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.