



On June 6, we celebrated Pentecost Sunday, the beginning of the liturgical season of Pentecost, which stretches from Pentecost Sunday (this year, June 6) until Advent (this year, Sunday, November 27).

On Pentecost Sunday we celebrate and live into the realities of the birth of the church with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as related in Acts 2. (See John 20:19-23 for another version of Jesus' giving of the Spirit.) The first half of the church year, with the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter, recalls and reenacts the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The themes of this season of Pentecost, from now till Advent, have to do with Christian living and the mission of the church in the world.

The traditional terminology for this season (and for the season of Epiphany) is "ordinary time." But, this season is anything but ordinary in our nonliturgical use of that word. Pentecost symbolizes the days between the birth of the church and Jesus' return, the in-between time in which we now live. Hence the focus on spirituality and mission.

Our lives get lived out on the stage of time and space, and it is tempting to assume that the world simply continues as always and will continue. But, biblical thought envisions an ending. Whether you take literally the apocalyptic images of angels descending, trumpets, etc., matters not. God intends to bring to an end our corrupting and exploiting of creation and of one another and to usher in a new creation in which the earth is cleansed and renewed and justice flows down like rivers.

Our calling is to live as if our current really is an in-between time and to give ourselves to worship, evangelism, healing, service, and justice. If Christ's return will bring healing, justice, and transformation, we are called to bring about as fully as possible now the realities he will usher in fully then. Living in those ways means that we always will be ready for the end, no matter when it comes. Setting dates and withdrawing from the world as those dates approach has failed whenever attempted and violates Jesus' teaching.

We have no time for date setting or for sitting around in white robes, waiting, or retreating from this dark and foreboding world. We have time only for immersion in the world, immersion modeled on Jesus ways of living and serving.

God's peace,

*David*

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