

The power of the Holy Spirit was released on Pentecost

As a result, the wonder of God was evident to everyone  
People saw a new reality—understanding people even though they spoke different languages  
The lame were made whole—running, jumping and praising God  
Peter spoke with power as he named the source of this new and wonderful reality  
The power of God in signs and wonders drew people to gather and experience for themselves  
People gathered spontaneously into a new community  
Acts 2:43-47 and 4:32-37

I think I'm drawn to these verses because they sound so wonderful and "nice"

I am tempted to see this as the end product of the Holy Spirit's power released among us  
Rather than being gathered as a people where they lived out the work they are called to do  
This isn't then end of the story—it is the beginning  
We keep reading through Acts and find people learning how to be a new people of God  
The learning is both good and bad—easy and difficult  
Ananias and Sapphira—lie and keep money for themselves—to their peril  
They have a hard time accepting Saul turned Paul  
They struggle with the Gentiles and don't agree on inclusion  
Paul and Barnabas disagree and separate  
Etc

People are gathered into community—not because they are all friendly and nice—favorite place to be  
It is really God who has gathered us  
In 1676 Francis Howgill said "*The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net*"  
God gathers the willing and the faithful and is not at all concerned about what we look like  
We are a motley crew of people gathered together, wondering what God will make of us  
We are strengthened by staying together in our diversity—we need each other—all of us  
We need each other to test and discern our Leadings  
We need the sense of accompaniment that comes from being with others

Yes—we need others to join us on this journey—but there is more

We're gathered together so that we can do the work of God—work which takes all of us  
In this time from Easter to Pentecost—Jesus told us what we are to be doing, what our work is  
In fact, our calling to do the work of God is all throughout Scripture—Old and New  
Gospels and the Epistles

Sometimes the church has emphasized the work of evangelism to a place of supreme importance

In reaction, we have also de-emphasized evangelism to our detriment  
We need it to find its right and natural place  
Evangelism is simply sharing the good news—why wouldn't we want to do that?  
Why has it gotten such a bad rap?

I think partly because we made it the most important work for everyone to do

Steve Wood talked about the gift of evangelism as people with the gift of "selling" God

We laugh about the gifted sales person who can "sell ice to an Eskimo"  
The person who has the gift of selling knows when and how to close the sale  
The person with the gift of evangelism knows how and when to ask the questions  
When a person is ready for next steps—when and how to tell them about God

The problem as I see it is that we've too often said everyone should be evangelizing  
I remember classes on how to tell people about God  
4 spiritual laws—I found it campaign—evangelism explosion—if I die tonight?  
Witnessing to your seat mate on the plane—even going door to door  
It got better with friendship evangelism, but the emphasis was on souls saved  
That's akin to assuming that everyone has the gift of selling something  
The result is the "stereotype used car sales person"—it doesn't work well  
Instead Steve contrasted the gift of selling with being a satisfied customer  
A satisfied customer simply tells a friend about something they've discovered that works  
There is no emphasis on the friend buying the product or "closing the sale"  
They simply talk about something that works well for them  
Contrast with the sales person who is trying to get another person to buy something  
Gifted sales persons know how long to do the pitch, when to ask for the sale etc  
Truth is that some of us have the gift of evangelism,  
but we are all called to be satisfied customers  
As a satisfied customer we are free to talk about our connection with God  
We can talk about the ways that God is alive in us  
Some will yearn to know more, others will not—it's ok—let it be natural  
But we need to honor the gift of evangelism—we need those with this gift to take their place  
Don't discard the power of the gift because it has been misused

1 Corinthians 12:7 - *Each person is given something to do that shows who God is...*

We all have work to do—a wide variety of work, which includes evangelism  
One of the most powerful is the work of forgiving people—work Jesus gave us—John 20:23  
Healing—as in Acts 3  
All the gifts of the Spirit are ways in which the power of God flows through us  
When true gifts there is power in them that isn't there otherwise  
Hospitality, discernment, faith/trust, knowledge, prophecy, wisdom, giving, helps, etc

The power of God flows through us in our lived out experiences with God  
Jeff and Lynne through receiving healing—have spoken powerful healing to others  
Beth in learning she didn't have to work afraid—has spoken freedom to others  
It isn't just the common experience that we are drawn to—it is the presence of God in another

We have been gathered here at North Seattle Friends Church by God—we have work to do together  
Sometimes it is collective work we do together  
Sometimes it is individualized work where we are accompanied by each other

The power of North Seattle Friends is that we know God—we Listen and live in this power

There are people around us that are hungry for this kind of knowing God—how do we connect?

1. We trust God to bring those to us who
2. We do the work that God gives us to do—most of which will be out there...
3. We are faithful "satisfied customers" who let God conversation be in all of life
4. We Listen in community to what God is saying in our midst
5. We live faithfully into the next steps, day by day
6. ...