

June 5, 2022 (Pentecost) | Sanctuary Worship Service

TEXT: [Romans 8:14–17](#)

TITLE: **The Beloved Dwelling Place**

By the Rev. BJ Woodworth

On the Day of Pentecost, we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit descending in a mighty rush of wind and flame to fill and inspire the church's proclamation of Christ's rising and to empower our mission and ministry to the world.

On this day of Pentecost, sounds from heaven, cosmic language, the rush of a mighty wind, invaded the house in which the apostles gathered and appeared to them as a burning fire. Tongues of fire touched their nerve centers. A power—the unseen power of God—moved among them and gripped them. The Holy Spirit is unseen, like the wind, which is why the Old Testament calls it *ruach YHWH*, “the wind, or breath, of God.” The Spirit is the “unseenness of God” working among us and... within us.

This is what Paul speaks of in our reading from Romans today, *God Spirit joins with our Spirit to declare that we are God's children.*

The Holy Spirit given to and dwelling within **ALL people**, breaks us out of our preoccupation with ourselves and frees us to serve neighbors, loosens our grasp on possessions, and sets us to loving people. As Romans, *the Spirit that God has given you does not enslave you and trap you in fear!*

One of the many gifts of the day of Pentecost that ripples out into the Church is that the universal presence of Spirit makes her home, her dwelling place in each and every one of us. You are the beloved dwelling place of God. The “unseenness” of God abides and is seen and made visible in you; in us.

As Paul rhetorically asks of the Corinthians, “*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*”

Individually and collectively, we are the very dwelling place of God. We are the holy of holies. We are where the beauty, glory and majesty of God reside. God's residing and abiding presence lives and moves and has it's being in each of you and the collective you. God does not live in temples built by human hands. God dwells in the inner room of our lives, that place where *God Spirit joins with our Spirit to declare that we are God's children, where deep calls unto to deep.*

The inner work of the Pentecost Spirit declares we are God's home! We are at home with God and God is at home with us, we dwell in the perfect community of God. We are safe, held, seen, honored, beloved, understood and accepted. And out of that inner space we cry Abba, Daddy, Amma, Mommy, the term Jesus scandalously used to speak of God.

This term Abba, that Jesus used to speak of God is not a term to gender God as male, rather it is term that flows out of deep love, intimacy, safety, trust, and tenderness with God. Jesus speaks of God in this manner out of the overflow of his sense of connectedness and oneness with God. He was fully at home with God as Abba and God was fully at home with Jesus as Beloved child. In fact, some say the Spirit is the bond of love and tenderness between Jesus and Abba.

The Holy Spirit is the bond of love between Abba God and Jesus the Christ and that Spirit has been given to us. The bond of love is poured out and given to you and all people and draws us into the loving communion between Abba God and Jesus the Christ. This is our inheritance. This is the gift of Pentecost. When Spirit comes to us and *joins with our spirit, we declare (like Jesus) that we are God's children; we cry out Abba... Amma.*

This is our truest and deepest sense of self! In the words of Brennan Manning, *“Our dignity as Abba’s child is our most coherent sense of self... It is the core truth of our existence. Define yourself, radically as one beloved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is illusion.”*

Travis, Cody, Annie, and Sam, as you confirmed your faith today know your truest identity and dignity is as the beloved child of God! Define yourself radically each day as one beloved by God. Each and every one of you on this Pentecost celebration, be reminded that your truest identity and dignity is as a beloved child of God! Define yourself radically each day as one beloved by God.

Do not succumb to the temptations, to define yourself otherwise. Do not succumb *enslavement or get trapped in fear* and define yourself by...

- What you do...
- What others think of you...
- What you can control...

The eternal temptation of all human beings, including Jesus, is to define ourselves and root our identity outside of ourselves—our actions, other people, our status, and abilities, etc. Spirit is given to free us from fear and help us be at home in ourselves with God, to be one within ourselves as Jesus and Abba are one.

Some years ago, I was praying in the morning and was using a Celtic prayer book who’s opening refrain was from Psalm 27: *“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in the temple.”* And as I said those words, I sensed Spirit joining with my spirit and inviting me to STOP and asked, “Where is my temple, who is my temple?” I began to weep...

I sensed Spirit saying to my spirit. You are my temple. There is no where you need to go, nowhere else you need to look. Gaze within, see the beauty and glory of God within yourself. I am within you. Stop returning to the fear and enslavement of looking to

outside to others and what you do, Spirit is in you, and YOU are beautiful, beloved, and glorious.

Friends Pentecost reminds us that we are beautiful, beloved, and glorious dwelling place of God. Spirit created our human spirits, and we were made to be at home within ourselves, within God, as partakers of God's divine nature. Our human spirit can encounter and directly experience the uncreated Divine Spirit. Spirit graces us with a capacity to know and respond to God's initiative.

Questions: Do you know what I speak of? When and where do you encounter and notice Spirit joining with your spirit? What happens in you when you notice that space? What does Spirit say or do, how do you feel?

And what is the purpose of all this inner work of the Spirit, this naming and noticing our belovedness, this trusting and delighting in the beauty and glory of God within our very selves, this declaration of our adoption as children?

Well... if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs (ancestors) with Christ, sharing in Christ's suffering and sharing in Christ's glory.

We are beneficiaries of God and co-inheritors with Christ, receiving the identity and charge of God in the world. As the beloved children of God, the beautiful and glorious dwelling place of God, filled with the Spirit who is the bond of love between Abba God and Jesus the Christ **we are becoming the beloved of community of God in the world!**

No longer trapped in fear but freed up in love we live into our inheritance, sharing and actualizing Christ's suffering and glory in the world in and through the Spirit, within us. We are the body of Christ in the world, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit in the world, filled and empowered to speak, witness, and enact the glorious communion with God at work within us.

Question: As you practice noticing Spirit joining with your spirit where are you being invited to be God's witness of justice, peace, love, and mercy in the world?

Friends this takes practice, and we must constantly and continually return to this inner sanctuary, or as Jesus described our inner room, to be with God, to notice and pay attention to where Spirit is joining with our spirit, connecting with truest and deepest sense of self. It is the place of true dwelling, true being and the place where we become centered, grounded, and rooted in the bond of Love, the Spirit. It is our home, where we dwell in safety and security with God. It is the place we receive guidance and direction about how we are to live, work, and serve out of amidst a world filled with difficulty, pain, struggle, and injustice.

Let me close with these words from one of my favorite books on the Holy Spirit, Clark Pinnock, *"Here is the answer to our scattered confusion, to the 'muchness' in 'manyness' that afflicts us. We must not forget that there is a sanctuary within us, to*

which we ought always retire. 'Eternity is within our hearts, pressing upon our time torn lives, warming us with intimations an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself.'"

On this Pentecost Sunday, may you feel your own spirit joined with God's Spirit, crying out Abba... Amma... and may you know in the depths of your being that you are indeed a child of God, empowered to love and serve in the world.

May it be so!