

THE 4TH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER - 10 MAY 2009
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

James 1:17 (KJV)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

There are a couple of good truths in that sentence. The first is that every good and perfect gift that we are given comes from God. In other words, all the good that comes our way is from God.

The other truth is that God does not change, that God is the same from the beginning of time to the end of eternity.

When I think of gifts, how all good gifts come from God, I'm reminded of Jesus' statement in *Luke 11:11-13 (KJV)* *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? [12] Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? [13] If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

We are in that period of liturgical time between the Resurrection and Pentecost; in fact we have not arrived at the Ascension yet, when Jesus is still among us in His resurrected state.

We have received the gift of His Resurrection but we are still without our receiving of the Holy Spirit.

There is still that anticipation.

But for most of us, it is business as usual. Easter is over. The high point, the mountain top is past. Now we are back slogging along on the sometime muddy path of life without a thought that maybe there is more to come, there is more to come before it is all over.

It is true that all good gifts come from God. Liturgically, we still have one more package to open. The sad part, for many of us in this world it is not a liturgical event but an actual occurrence. For many in this world have never received the Holy Spirit, have never allowed the Almighty Triune God to come into their hearts.

Even for some of us here at St. John's this morning we only have a passing acquaintance with Him.

To be Christian is to be on fire.

In his book, *Saint Francis*, Nikos Kazantzakis has Brother Leo, Francis' long-suffering companion, in describing the saint, saying, "*But whenever he spoke, prayed or thought he was alone, his squat body shot forth flames which reached the heavens: he became an archangel with red wings which he beat in the air. And if this happened at night when the flames were visible, you recoiled in terror to keep from being burned. 'Put yourself out, Brother Francis, I used to cry. 'Put yourself out before you burn up the world.'"*

In Luke 12:49 (ESV) Jesus says, *I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!*

To be Christian is to be on fire with the Holy Spirit.

Again turning to Luke we hear from Acts 2:1-3 (KJV) *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. [2] And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. [3] And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat*

upon each of them.

Those that sat in that room on that day were set on fire by the coming of the Holy Spirit.
Those that sat in that room on that day were never the same.

We all here, in our Confirmation, with the laying on of our Bishop's hands, received that same Holy Spirit, that same Holy Spirit that those gathered that day of Pentecost in that room in Jerusalem received... without any diminishment... without any alteration

We received that same flame that set the world on fire and it is up to us, you and I, to keep not only the fire going but to spread it.

Not by what we say.

Not by what we say, but by what we do.

God does not change. God does not change and neither has the flame of Pentecost, the fire of the Holy Spirit changed.

We are still expected to light the world on fire.

Jesus had our Patron Saint, John, write in Rev. 3:14-16 (KJV) And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; [15] I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. [16] So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

In this world of darkness, in this world of sin, you and I with the little spark of that remains in the coal of fire in our hearts are called, are called to rekindle first our own flame then to use that flame to light up the night; to become red archangels beating our fiery wings; to burn up the world with the love of Christ.

Today, the greatest danger to the Church is not the heresies that have become rampant in all quarters. It is not the overwhelming immorality of society. It is not the unconsummated greed that pervades our economic system.

It is letting the fire grow cold.

It is letting the flame go out.

It is apathy.

Amen.