

" Like A Big Happy Family"- Acts 2:1-8,1Peter 3:8-15

It was just after Ben Franklin's kite flying days and some Frenchmen were experimenting with electricity. They wanted to know how fast it moves. The Abbot of a large monastery volunteered his monks for the experiment. The monks had taken a vow of obedience, so they had no choice. They lined up a thousand monks, each holding the hand of the one next to him. Then the electric current was applied to the first man in the line and every one of those 1,000 monks jumped up into the air at the same moment.

I draw three conclusions from this story: first, electricity moves with astonishing speed; second, abbots in eighteenth century monasteries had tremendous authority over their monks; and thirdly, wouldn't it be wonderful if a thousand people in the church today would get excited enough to jump in the air at the same time.

We are celebrating Pentecost Sunday. It was on the Day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came upon three thousand people and their lives were never the same again as they were commissioned to and empowered to take the good news of God's love and forgiveness to the world. From this experience also emerged the birth of the church. So, on this day every year we remember and celebrate the excitement and privilege, the mission, and the task we have as the family of God's people known as the church. In his Epistle, that I read to you a few

moments ago, Peter tells us that, as the church, we are to be a big, happy family. But you and I know that even the happiest of families have their problems.

Where do we find the electricity that will cause the church to get on fire, like it was on the Day of Pentecost? We do it by asking ourselves are we accomplishing the three important tasks of the church?

The first task we need to accomplish as the church is to help us and others to love God more. The preacher, Phillips Brooks preached a sermon on the phrase from the New Testament "Make the men sit down." The context of this phrase was that the people were pushing and surging around Jesus. For him to be able to minister to them, it was necessary for them to sit down that they might receive from him what he was prepared to give. That is what worship is all about. You and I have been pushing and surging all week long in the marketplace., at school, among friends and those we work with. Worship is the time we sit down and wait in readiness for what God must show us. As we discover God repeatedly and experience his love, we then can help others to discover ways to love God more.

The second task is to help us to love one another more. The Living Bible translates Peter's words from his letter like this: "You should be like one happy family, full of sympathy towards each other, loving one another with tender hearts, and humble minds." Here is the real

strength of the church-- it is the love we share for one another.

In his book, "Rebuild Your Life", Dale E. Galloway tells the story of a little bird who got trapped in a large church sanctuary. The custodian did all that he could to get the little bird out. He opened windows and doors, but to no avail. The little bird soon became exhausted and fell to the floor. He was not dead, but must have felt half-dead. The custodian went over and picked up the little bird, carried him outside and gently opened his hands. The little bird flapped his wings and flew away--with new life. He was free.

Does God not do the same thing for people? Quite often he uses the church to lift the brokenness and bruises of our life and lift us to freedom again. There are people all around you this morning who might need your love. A child or teenager who need encouragement. Someone who is lonely or suffering from deep disappointment or deep hurt. Someone who has been ravaged by sickness or the loss of a loved one. The church where there is excitement and a future, is the church where people truly love and care for one another.

The third task is that we must love the world for whom Christ died. A faith that never gets out of the pulpit or the pew, is a dead and useless faith. We cannot be insular and say to the world, "We are a club and our purpose is to serve ourselves." For God so loved

the world, that he gave his only son..." We are to give our faith, our hope, God's good news, to a world that needs it, but also, we do because we, unlike most other people, are called to love the world with all its shortcomings and differences.

It's Pentecost Sunday. A time to be reminded that I am the church; you are the church; we are the church together. We are called as this church, this body of believers in the living God, to do three things: To help persons love God more, to help us to love each other more, and to share the love of Christ's to the world. Because we are called to be one happy family.