

“Spiritual Disruption”
Acts 1:1-11
The Rev. Nancy Conklin
Sunday, Sept. 11, 2022

In the movie “Dead Poets Society,” Robin Williams played Professor John Keating, who taught English at a prestigious boarding school. At the start of the new school year, he takes his incoming class of freshmen into the hallway and leads them to a trophy case. Professor Keating tells them to look closely at the faded black-and-white photos of previous classmen. Then, in a slow and deliberate tone, he says:

They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster. They believe they're destined for great things, just like many of you; their eyes are full of hope, just like you. Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable? Because, you see gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen, you hear it? *Carpe!* Hear it? *Carpe!* *Carpe diem!* Seize the day boys! Make your lives extraordinary!

For some people, that call to live extraordinary lives rings so loud and clear they are compelled to follow it with zealous passion. For others, the call gets muffled among all the other noises of life. *Carpe diem!* Seize the day! Make your life extraordinary! That, I like to imagine, was the same sentiment Jesus in resurrected bodily form was trying to convey to his pupils of privilege — privilege not of wealth, but of being in Jesus’ inner circle; his closest confidants, with whom he shared the divine plan of salvation. Now, they are to be witnesses to that plan, not simply to how Jesus lived it out among them, but witnesses to the reality standing before them ... the reality of life beyond death.

Jesus assures them their ability to witness to that reality will come when they receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “Listen, lean in, *carpe diem*, seize the day! Make your lives extraordinary.” Maybe that was all too much for those disciples to take in, because their immediate response is to ask, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?” as if they didn’t hear a word he said. Still hoping for the restoration of the throne of David, their national identity as the people of Israel, and the life in the temple to be just as was in the glory days of old. Unable to fully comprehend the reality they have experienced — the kingdom of God had come among them, bringing about a new world order made possible by the transcending of boundaries, be they physical, social, political, or religious. Jesus admonishes them — it is not for you to be concerned with the timing of God’s plan — but to trust the Spirit will unfold it before them as they witness to others of their experience of the resurrection.

We recall that that timing Jesus is speaking about is described as a *kairos* moment, when the Holy Spirit disrupts our ordinary lives at an opportune moment resulting in decisive action. Standing between the reality of resurrection they had experienced and the genesis of the new creation unfolding before them at the dawn of the age of the Spirit was a *kairos* moment for the disciples. An invitation to be agents of the Holy Spirit,

establishing the fullness of God's reign by the gathering together of people and places as they spread the good news of the gospel to the ends of the earth. "Listen, lean in, *carpe diem!* Seize the day! Make your life extraordinary" is Jesus' final charge to them.

He is issuing us that same invitation and charge as we stand together in that same *kairos* moment, standing between what we've known of our experience of Jesus and the emerging of a new birth of the Spirit in our time. In the coming weeks, we will be inspired (literally meaning to be filled with creative energy) as we "lean in and listen" to the stories of the Acts of those privileged disciples who became apostles of the Holy Spirit, envisioning the many ways the Spirit is seeking to disrupt our lives. How She will enflame our tongues, enabling us to witness to the emergence of God's new creation in our midst. How the Spirit seeks to weave new threads of belonging, creating intimate spaces, free of fear and mistrust. In this moment of social, political, and religious upheaval, how we will receive new vision of life beyond what has been? We will watch again how the Spirit opened the eyes and hearts of Gentiles and Jews so that they came to see how their stories were inseparably rooted in the same covenantal love of God, able to acknowledge their shared giftedness and their common call to be agents of redemption in the world. That spiritual disruption shaping our own desire to join together deeply with others not from a "should," but from our own hunger for the creation of God's beloved community.

The invitation for us in this *kairos* moment is the same as it was for the disciples who were stuck looking up at heaven, wondering, what now? To remember that, we disciples who have sat at the feet of our master and teacher have become apostles — those sent to live what we have been taught. Today is Christian Formation Sunday. It used to be Christian Education Sunday, signifying the beginning of a new church school year. Several years ago, we reclaimed the use of Christian or spiritual formation to reinforce our commitment to not simply study the words that Jesus taught so that we can become biblical scholars, but that our lives and our life together are to be continually formed and reformed by the Word and the call of the Spirit. Not simply a change in terms, but a change in how and why we are to teach and study the Word together, that we might become both learned and transformed enabling us to fulfill Jesus' challenge: "*Carpe diem!* Seize the day! Make your lives extraordinary!"