**EcoFaith Institute, 2017**

**Sunday Morning Practice #1**

**Pentecost as the Practices**

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*This Morning’s Reading is from the Pentecost Story of the Newly Revised Practices Version of the EcoFaith Recovery Bible.*

When the day of Pentecost had come, all of Jesus’ closest disciples, women, men, queer folks of all sorts, were together in one place. Jesus had told the women at the tomb to go to Jerusalem and get ready because they were about to access spiritual power as they had never known before so that their movement “for the recovery of human life and the healing of God’s creation” could continue even without their leader.

And suddenly, inside the house, the air started moving – the air they breathed every moment of every day started blowing and swirling and suddenly fire! The fire of the Sun, the fire of life, the fire of a burning passion came upon each and every one of them and they were filled with ***spiritual power***!

Spiritual power with a purpose. Not spiritual power for self-aggrandizement, or spiritual power to amass wealth. No, the spiritual power they accessed was the power to connect with people vastly different from themselves. The power of the Spirit gave them the ability to speak different languages - and not only to speak but to understand other languages, to ***develop relationships*** across differences in ways they had never been able to before. To understand another person’s language and the worldview that accompanies that language. To see from another person’s perspective. To develop relationships across differences and awaken a new kind of spiritual power in the other person and in the relationship itself.

Now, of course, there were people watching. People who remained isolated, believing all the Roman propaganda about self-sufficiency and individualism and never-ending progress, and they didn’t understand what was going on so they trivialized it. Put it down. Laughed at it. “They’re drunk,” they said.

But the disciples responded not with judgment but with compassion by ***telling their stories***. Because, you see, they knew that the power of God was at work in their lives. They KNEW that the power of God’s liberating love had been at work in the lives and stories of their people, the stories of their land. And so Peter got up in public and told his story. He reached back into the stories of his ancestors to help interpret what was happening right now. And it was through the sharing of those stories that people who once made fun of them, were “cut to the heart” and asked the disciples, “What should we do?”

And the followers of Jesus, filled with spiritual power, said, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation” — look at the destructive powers at work, see how we participate in them. Look how we isolate ourselves and objectify others. See how our own faith tradition has been coopted by the powers of empire and turned into legalism and rule following or empty rituals. Look at how the power of our courageous ancestors in liberation Moses and Miriam and Aaron runs through our veins and yet we abdicate our public responsibility to act for justice. Repent! The disciples said, “Repent of your abdication of collective power, and you *will* receive the power of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom God calls.”

And about three thousand people registered for the EcoFaith Institutes that day! I mean, were baptized that day!

But wait, there’s more! That was just the beginning! Then they began the process of ***mentoring and being mentored by one another,*** passing on their ancestral wisdom and stories, learning and teaching, and developing more and more relationships as they broke bread together and prayed.

And ***they acted together publicly***! They held actions in the temple courts every day, and ***evaluated their actions on*** flip charts made of papyrus. [Ok, I made up the evaluation part, but I’m SURE they at least reflected on their actions!] This part I’m not making up: Because of their collective relationships and spiritual power they were able to divest from Rome’s extraction economy that was killing them and everyone around them. They sold private property and possessions and created an alternative economy that made sure that no one had too much so that no one would have too little.

They were returning to the sacred rhythms of Sabbath and Jubilee. They were ***restoring balance*** in the belly of an empire that had gotten so devastatingly out of balance. And it was the happiest and most joyful any of them had ever been. It’s true, for it says, “they broke bread and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.” Joy. Joy in the impossible and never ending work of restoring balance in the belly of empire. Joy. Can you image? Joy! Let’s imagine! May it be so. Amen