

## What's Possible to Do

Romans 8:14-17, John 14:8-17

Today is Pentecost. Originally a harvest festival, Pentecost became a celebration of Torah for the Jewish people, marking fifty days from the beginning of Passover. For Christians, this festival has become a time to remember the giving of the Holy Spirit in a story told in the book of *Acts*. The Christian Church was effectively born at Pentecost. Disciples such as Simon Peter were transformed from fearful and indecisive followers to powerful, clear, and even heroic leaders.

Late in his career, Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome prior to going there as a prisoner of the empire. He reminded them of that Pentecost Spirit, "You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear." Fear is an intrinsic part of life. It is perfectly normal and sometimes even wise. But sometimes fear controls us. Fear can hold us captive and can cause us to lose track of our dreams. We become afraid for our own security, afraid we won't have enough of what we need to survive. Fear causes us to live out of touch with our deepest values. Paul was talking about such a "spirit of slavery" that leaves us mired in fear and unable to live fully and heroically.

The great gift of Christian theology is the assertion that we are adopted children of God, beloved sisters and brothers of Christ--that we embody the essential nature of the Spirit of God and therefore are able to act with power and purpose. In John's gospel, Jesus said something quite extraordinary: "the one who believes in me will ... do greater works" than I." He then identified those works as works of love:

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [God] will give you another Advocate to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth.

I take this to mean that the "greater works" we can do are works rooted in love and empowered by the Spirit who is with us and in us. This is our task as people. Specifically, this is our calling as the church. Crossroads Church exists to perform acts of love here in Kansas City and to partner with other people and other churches to act in love across this metro area, across this nation and around this world.

The giving and receiving of the Spirit at Pentecost illustrates the task we take on as followers of Jesus. He promised that we can have great success in accomplishing our work. We can do even greater works of love than Jesus. So, a few key questions challenge us today. They hold the secret of meaning for each of our lives--yours and mine. They hold the secret of success for this congregation--what we want our lives to be and what we want church to be in the world.

The key questions are:

- What is it we want to do?
- What is possible for us to do?
- What will it take to do it?

Crossroads Church is the product of a struggle to be free. It exists as the result of a desire by many of you to be free. Yes, we are sometimes distracted by our fears and sometimes bound by the forms and assumptions of church we've inherited, but we are also free to be church in risky, creative, and daring ways. We are free to follow Jesus with as much honesty as we can find, free to ask really hard questions and pursue honest answers.

Crossroads is a powerful expression of a desire for genuine community, a desire to share the journey of faith with people who will walk with you, talk with you, and love you no matter what. It is a realization of the dream of church not determined by the will of a pastor or of a church hierarchy, but by a people's interaction with the Holy Spirit. Crossroads is our dream of how church can be.

So, what is possible for us to do? Anything we really want, anything we choose and commit ourselves to do! How will we make this *anything* happen? That answer is simple and challenging. Choose what you want to do and choose how you want to be. Commit your time, energy, money, and personal presence to make it happen. Commit yourself to a level of work and of giving that both feeds you and demands sacrifice of you.

Choose to let any fear, pain, or suffering you have experienced--and what we experience together--make you grow, make us grow. Re-commit yourself, or commit yourself anew, to being a member of this faith community called Crossroads Church. Be on the journey with us. Learn to burn fear and grief as fuel for the journey. Do this so that we can together do significant works of love that will help transform this congregation and the KC community in Jesus' name.