

## Acts 2:1-21

The residents of Hawaii are rather anxious. The Kilauea volcano has been erupting, and could yet unleash a massive eruption spewing hot ash and lava everywhere. For some time there were warning signs. Already people had to evacuate, leaving their property behind to be destroyed by the volcano. No one can stop this thing. You don't keep an active volcano from erupting. You simply do whatever it takes to get out of its deadly path.

Now what if Kilauea was laying dormant? What if there were no warning signs that it might erupt? Say, for example, that this volcano has been dormant for the last 2,000 years. Would any of the residents of Hawaii be anxious? Of course not. They would not be on the alert. They would not be preparing to evacuate. They probably wouldn't have volcano insurance. Residents and visitors alike would be taking their picnic lunches up to the very top of the volcano.

There is a parallel here with our Pentecost text. On that day, Pentecost Sunday, Peter preached these words from the prophet Joel: *"And (God) will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day..."*

This earth is going to erupt. Not one or two volcanoes here and there. The entire earth, along with the sun, moon, and stars. Everything God created will be destroyed by fire. Not a fire that we cause. Not a natural fire. God's fire - the flames of His hot wrath which will bring our universe to an end.

And there have been warning signs. The Great Flood of Noah's day, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the fall of Jericho, the destruction of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. Sign after sign that the end is coming has been given. But the last sign was 2,000 years ago. The volcano has been dormant for the last 2,000 years. And people here, there, and everywhere are not prepared for it to erupt.

The day of Pentecost is the last time the volcano was active. On that day a mighty rushing wind filled the house where the disciples had gathered, and tongues of fire came to rest on the disciples. Fire. These little flames of fire are significant. As Peter preached, with that little flame above his head, the volcano was active. It was a reminder, a warning, that the last days are upon us; the great flames are coming, and no one can stop it from happening.

But that was then, and this is now...2,000 years later. *"Where are the signs of His coming?"* People say this mocking. Since the volcano has been dormant for so long, people are not concerned. Even Christians. So many of God's own people are losing their preparedness. They are not on the alert.

What about us? How long has it been since you were actively in the Word of God? Are you obsessed, even a little bit, with studying it and understanding it? Are you driven, with a hunger in your very soul, to hear it preached to you? Admit it, you and I are becoming lax. The volcano is dormant. And so we're not preparing ourselves as God invites and commands us. We're becoming so engrossed with the world around us that we're forgetting our calling as God's Christian people.

But God is not dormant. He was active on Pentecost Sunday, and He is active today. He brought people *"from every nation under heaven"* (it says), to hear Peter's sermon. God was calling them to repentance.

*“Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* Peter preached these words. They all heard, and many repented and believed. They called upon the name of the Lord.

The same Holy Spirit who worked through Peter’s sermon is at work through this pulpit today. And today it’s us that He’s calling to repentance. Let us, therefore, confessing our sins, call upon the name of the Lord because, friend, God forgives you.

Today we see red...the color for Pentecost. Red for fire. But also red for blood. The blood of the Lord upon whose name you call. He spilled His blood on Calvary’s cross for you. It was there that Jesus endured the flames. God erupted with His hot wrath and punishment, pouring it all upon His Son in your place. That river of molten lava was deflected away from you to your Lord on the cross.

In your baptism you called upon the name of the Lord. He put His name on you there and declared that you are His forgiven one. He doused the fires with those precious waters. And in the water of baptism you are safe with Jesus. Call upon His name each and every day, making the sign of His cross over your heart as was done when you were baptized. Yes, your home here will be destroyed by fire, but not you. You belong to Jesus. His saving name is written on your head and on your heart.

And one more thing we do. They did it on Pentecost Sunday. The disciples of Jesus, it says, *“were all together in one place.”* They gathered for worship. They gathered to receive the gifts of God. And did they ever receive!

Those same gifts the Holy Spirit brings to us today as we gather together. But we’re pulled, aren’t we, in different directions. Some here, some there. We don’t gather anymore, not faithfully as we should. It’s that volcano. It’s been dormant for so long that we don’t sense the need to gather regularly and faithfully.

At our Bible Breakfast last Wednesday morning one of the men shared with us a touching story. He was at a Special Olympics a while back. During one of the races a contestant fell down. All the others stopped running and gathered to help. They picked up their fallen friend so that they could continue to run the race together.

Isn’t that how God wants us to run the race to heaven? He wants us to stay together. Together we stay alert. Together we stay prepared. We don’t abandon those who have fallen away from the Lord. We help them to come back to run with us again. In Hawaii, would friends and loved ones abandon someone who is having trouble evacuating? Of course not. They would help. They would do what they could to rescue their dear friend.

*“When Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.”* Our gathering together here today is a prelude to our gathering together in heaven. This gathering comes first; that gathering will follow. The volcano is dormant now. But we know it will erupt. And so we call upon the name of the Lord. We gather around Jesus. In Him we are safe from the fires. And those who are missing - may the Holy Spirit use us, you and me, to bring them back to the Lord. Amen.