

“GO FOR IT!”
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Fifth and final sermon in the series, “The Gospel in Great Movies”
“Carpe Diem” (“Seize the Day”) as seen in “Dead Poets Society”

Acts 2:1-21

John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

I remember watching a movie once where one character asked the other characters “what was your best day ever?” I think the movie might have been “City Slickers.” At any rate, every time I see that movie and that particular scene, I try to answer that question for myself. “What was my best day ever?”

Ask yourself that question sometime. It will make you think and then it will make you feel good and smile - a lot!

While I don’t know what all of your answers would be to that question, I do know this - that one of the best days ever for the church is the day we’re celebrating today - the Day of Pentecost. For this is the day that the church, as we know it, was born.

You heard the account of its birth in the incredibly challenging reading that Joe shared. Disciples were gathered in one place, and suddenly the Holy Spirit descended upon them with a vengeance! There was the sound like the rush of a violent wind - like a tornado. Tongues of fire appeared and rested upon them. The Spirit filled them and they began to speak, and people from all places and all different backgrounds who had gathered together there began to hear them - and each one could understand them in their own native language!

It was unbelievable. The Spirit gathered them together and convicted them all, and that very day alone, over 3000 souls were saved, and over 3000 souls went forth as the church, the body of Christ. It was an absolutely life-changing moment, a life-changing event!

Something incredible began on that first day of Pentecost, and Jesus’ followers, swept away by the Holy Spirit, seized that power and went for it! They grabbed the gusto, they were convicted in their hearts that Jesus was the Lord of their lives, and they went forth from that place to make more disciples of Jesus Christ.

And then those disciples, made more disciples. And those disciples, other disciples. Until today, we gather in this space at this moment in time, and celebrate eight more new disciples claiming Jesus as their own. The Spirit, who descended so powerfully on that first Day of Pentecost and filled thousands of lives with passion and power, is still at work in the world in a mighty way, and today, we see it in the lives of eight young people right here in our midst.

What a joy it is for us to see it! What a joy it is for us to witness these young people say yes to a life of faith, for we know that there are so many others who don't or won't. So, in light of our joy and happiness for them, I want to, on behalf of you and myself, invite them to do something even more as they are confirmed - and that is - "Carpe Diem" - which means "seize the day."

Which brings us to the fifth and final movie of this sermon series. For those of you who haven't been around during the month of May, let me tell you that during May I've been preaching a sermon series entitled "The Gospel in Great Movies" where we've looked at the things of faith through some wonderful movies. We looked at the kingdom of heaven in "Places in the Heart," parental love in "Life is Beautiful," everyone's worth and uniqueness in "It's a Wonderful Life," and sacrifice in "Saving Private Ryan."

Today we'll spend a little time with a great movie filmed a number of years ago not far from here - mostly in Middletown, DE at St. Andrews' School, but also in New Castle and other places nearby. It's called "Dead Poets Society" and starred Robin Williams as a wonderful English teacher named John Keating.

John Keating was the kind of teacher that everyone of us would have loved having - a man filled with passion and enthusiasm, and challenge and imagination. A teacher who was unafraid of unorthodox teaching methods if it helped reached students. A teacher who, by the way, was very threatening to those of a strictly traditional nature, which most of his colleagues were.

Well, the movie is all about how Mr. Keating lights a fire and passion for learning within his students. The clip I want to focus on for this sermon actually takes place very early in the movie - it's actually the first time the students meet him. As you'll see, it's a very upscale private boy's school, where they attend class in white shirt and ties, and everything is very rigid and regimented.

Enter John Keating . . .

Film clip

"Seize the day! Make your lives extraordinary!" Mr. Keating wanted, more

than anything, for his students, to seize the day, live their lives fully, completely and passionately - to go for it!

I can't think of many better words to say to our confirmands today than those. "Seize the day! Make your lives extraordinary!" God has given you a great gift - the gift of His Holy Spirit - to fill you and empower you, and make anything possible through you. So go for it! Seize the day! Be all that God has created you to be!"

And like Mr. Keating, I want to challenge these youth, and indeed, all of you, to lean in and listen to those who have come before us. Lean in, and listen to Peter the apostle, for he will teach you what it means to step out in faith even when you don't know where you're going. He'll remind you that sometimes he stepped out in faith and great things happened, but sometimes he stepped out and put his foot in his mouth or sank in water when he took his eyes off of Jesus. But everything he did, he did with gusto and passion!

Or lean in and listen to John Wesley, our founder, the founder of Methodism. Lean in, and he'll tell you how he seized the day and went for it, when he got tired of staid old Anglicanism. He got tired of doing things the same way over and over again, inside the stained glass fortresses of the churches in England, and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, he started holy clubs where people shared their faith and went out in mission and ministry among the poor and needy. And then he sent ministers across the pond here to America where fires of faith were lit, up and down the eastern seaboard and then across this great nation as it grew.

Or lean in and listen to your grandparents and parents, your Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, pastors and friends-in-faith. They'll tell you about how their faith has carried them through life, and enabled them to do things they never thought they could do. They'll tell you about God helping them live fully and faithfully and passionately and enthusiastically.

On this day, when these young people prepare to stand before all of us and confess their faith, I invite them and all of you to "seize the day!" Allow the Holy Spirit to sweep into your life and take over. Go for it! Live fully and faithfully! Ask God what He wants you to do and then rise to the challenge of doing it!

Who knew, on that first Day of Pentecost, two thousand some years ago, that what started with those few thousand people would be alive and powerful on this day having touched billions of people over those years? Who knew that the wind that blew through that gathering would still blow through this gathering making all things possible? God knew, that's who.

So, in the Spirit of Pentecost, let me invite you to let the Spirit of the Living God flow through you. Carpe Diem - Seize the Day! Live fully and faithfully as a disciple of the One who died to give you that opportunity. Be all that you can be! Go out on a limb for God! Don't just be nice - be caring and compassionate! Don't just get by - thrive! Don't just turn the other cheek - but forgive and forgive and forgive! Don't be content to do things the way they've always been done - stick out your neck and try something new! God has created each one of us to be something special and has given us the Spirit to do it - so let's do it!

Carpe Diem! Seize the day! It is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice, be glad in it, and let us go for it! May it be so. Amen