

The Fire of Pentecost

By A.D. Beacham, Jr.

Susan and I visited Prague and toured the Castle Church of St. Vitus Cathedral. I noticed the artistic window that is in the photo below. Unfortunately, my photo does not capture the brilliance of the sun's rays that illuminated the fire of the Holy Spirit falling upon the 120 gathered in the Upper Room. For us, as Christians who are part of the Pentecostal movement, it was a powerful image, and I made a point of pointing it out to our guide.

I mention the guide for several reasons. One, a personal tour guide is a great way to see Prague. Second, she was well-informed, an active 60-year-old, very friendly and kind, who eagerly turned our original four-hour tour into six hours. Third, there was time to talk about the religious atmosphere of Prague and the nation.

At one point I asked her about the religious make-up of the nation: was it primarily Catholic or mixed Protestant?

"The Czech Republic is mainly non-religious," she replied. "This is not because of when we were under Soviet communist control. As a nation we have tended to be secular. We have churches but people go to them for concerts."

I asked her, "Do people celebrate Christmas?"

"Oh, yes. Most families decorate on Christmas Eve, and some will go to a church for a concert. We do not put emphasis on Santa Claus. Rather, children are told that the Baby Jesus will bring them gifts." She laughed. "Parents tell children that the Baby Jesus is watching to see if they are behaving."

In response I had several thoughts:

- Jesus is primarily for children and is a mix of spy, judge, and gift-giver.
- I remembered that Czech culture is the home of a way of living described in the term Bohemian, with its anti-establishment orientation

- She described the dominant western world spirit, life without a need for God, life with monuments to an ancient world of faith.

Later we toured the [Pinkas Synagogue of Prague](#). Our guide pointed out an old shoe in the synagogue that was used in wedding ceremonies. That opened the window for us to ask her if she knew the Bible background to that? She said no, she did not know it. I asked if she had read the Book of Ruth, and again the answer was no. We used that opportunity to talk about the use of the sandal in Ruth 4:7-12 and the connection to the lineage of Jesus. We encouraged her to read the book of Ruth, and Luke 7:11-17 because of the connection to the city gates at Nain and the miracle Jesus performed there (she had not read Luke either). Needless to say, Susan and I remember this wonderful lady and pray that she has read Ruth and Luke, and that the Holy Spirit will open her mind and spirit to the reality of God's life.

I mention this personal story not only because of the Pentecost stained glass window and Pentecost Sunday, but also because of the story of Ruth and the importance of seeking ways to share the story of Jesus. Ruth is commonly read in synagogues during the Jewish festival of *Shavuot*, or Pentecost. It was an agricultural festival, and the Ruth account shows how the family of God is open to anyone who will believe, including a Moabite woman. If you have Eugene Peterson's *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, read chapter two for an engaging look at Ruth and Pentecost.

The story of Ruth, and the story of the Prague tour guide, came together for me in a [recent article by Thom Rainer](#) about the lack of evangelism among Christians. The spirit of the age, with its emphasis on a form of toleration that means all views are equal, and some are more equal based on the changing winds of political and social expediency, leads us to believe that we are imposing, or insensitive, or triggering, or (the worst accusation) judgmental and condemning, if we share the good news of the gospel.

For Christians, the reality is that our faith is an *evangelistic* faith, meant to be shared in the power of the Holy Spirit. That means the Holy Spirit guides us in how to best approach those with whom we encounter. In some instances, the Holy Spirit leads us to simply be quiet and patiently listen. Other times the Spirit leads us to speak boldly with love. At others the Spirit awakens us to the inquiring heart in someone's question. Regardless of the situation, Pentecost is at the heart of evangelism. Pentecost is the

heart of God's loving nature, revealed in the passion of His Son Jesus, and manifested through the Spirit in the grace and wisdom of our engagement with those we meet. My prayer for us this Pentecost Sunday is that our hearts will be moved by God's seeking heart, and that we will discover fresh expressions of sharing God's loving heart. Like the one hundred twenty on the Day of Pentecost described in Acts 2, let's be filled with the Spirit and share the good news of Jesus Christ.