

Gods final victory over evil. That power is the Holy Spirit, given to everyone who believes in Christ, and recreates them as children of God.

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Acts 2:1-21

The Day of Pentecost has its roots in Judaism, in Shavot, a festival celebrating the giving of the Law, and the forming of a people. Here Luke presents the day as the ‘giving of God’s Spirit’. It forms a unit with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, consummating the story of salvation. On that day a ‘new people’ were formed, the church, for the purpose of making known the gospel to people everywhere. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit who is the driving force behind this work.

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below; blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Sermon

The Mighty Power of God

When you hear the news lately, do you ever feel overwhelmed? I know I do. Sometimes I feel like it is all too much. Sometimes it feels unbelievable – like it is 'fake news'. Sometimes I feel like saying 'What in the world is going on!?'

If you ever feel that way, then maybe we can grasp how the crowds felt on the day of Pentecost. They all came running, at what seemed an incomprehensible moment. Listen again:

"all the disciples were together in one place. Without warning, there was the sound of a violent wind, gale force, coming from heaven, and it filled the house. Then there appear to fall a wildfire, it divided up and spread among their ranks, resting on each one. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:1-4

If anything, this day of Pentecost, this explosion of God's mighty Spirit is anything but our tame, mild, Sunday School images. It was earth-shaking, like a tornado or a wildfire spreading in the center of the city, Jerusalem. And people came running from every direction: stunned, agog, besides themselves, blown away, and in an uproar. They were all asking 'what's going on here?', they were asking 'What does all this mean?'

So, what does it all mean, not just for them, but for us? Well, Peter gives us the answer, straight up. The Holy Spirit has come, with all the power of God. The same power that gusted and blew over the void and formed all creation. The same power that engulfed Mt Sinai in thick smoke and flame, and formed the nation, Israel. The same power who claimed prophets and declared the 'coming day of God's glory' replete with 'wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below.'

Did the power of the Holy Spirit just to cause people to drop like flies in terror? No. The whole goal of the Spirit's work, from the first day of creation to the last, is to form a 'new creation' so that 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' In other words, the purpose of God has always been, not just to form a people, but to create children in God's image. And that, my friends, does take the Spirit. As Paul remind so clearly explains: "The Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves... instead the Spirit makes you God's children, and by the Spirit's power we call him Father..." (Rom 8:15). To say 'Father' is not about fear and dread, it is about joy and love, it is about hope and strength and peace.

And more than just giving us the Spirit, so we can 'enjoy God forever' (to quote Luther), the Spirit has been given to us so that we can 'proclaim the wonderful acts of God' (1 Peter 2:9). Which is, after all, the very thing Peter and the disciples were doing when crowds gathered on that first day of Pentecost; they were telling everyone of the great work God had done in Jesus, the Messiah.

But the Spirit didn't just move those first handful of disciples. No, the Spirit has moved, is moving and will always move – in us – to make know the wonders of God; from Peter and Paul, to Timothy and Titus, to Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Moody, Judson and Graham, and so many, many more. And the Spirit works not just in 'witness and evangelism', but in a whole host of gifts that bring healing and hope, provision and peace, service and grace. All so that God's glory; may be revealed and God's kingdom may be established, as we so often pray 'on earth as it is in heaven.'

As far as I can see, and the nightly news confirms, that prayer can only be answered by the power of the Spirit. That is the power we must avail ourselves of if we are to live as God's children, not just in name, but in character and service. We may not have experienced a mighty wind, but maybe we can take a deep breath and fan a stirring for God's refreshment and renewal. We may now have experienced tongues of fire, but maybe we can kindle the embers of hope that are sparking our compassion and service to our community. We may not have experienced speaking in unfamiliar languages, but maybe we can graciously express in our own words the great things that God has done for us.

After all, from what I can see, and the story of the church, is that the Day of Pentecost never ended, and it won't until the kingdom of God comes in all its fullness.

Are you open to the Spirit sweeping us up into the power of that day? Amen.

***Hymn** O Spirit of the Living God NCH 263

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Mighty God, we thank you for the wonders of your creation, the glory of your redemption and the power of your transformation. We are awed and humbled that you have claimed us as your children and servants, and so we come to you now, asking for the grace, courage and wisdom to live up to your call.

We pray for your church and for this congregation. May we recognize the presence of your Spirit among us and give ourselves to her guidance so that we may achieve your good purposes for us, for our community, and for our world. We pray for our world and all its leaders. May the Spirit inspire and direct them in your ways of justice and peace for all peoples, that all may enjoy your gift of life. We pray also for all you need your help today. Grant your healing to the ill, your comfort to the sorrowful, and your provision to the needy. We especially lift up... and we thank you for...

We thank you and praise you, Glorious God, for the tremendous gift of your Spirit through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Choral Response Remember Me

Offering

Invitation: Through the Spirit we are inspired to proclaim God's marvelous works. Through God's Spirit we are empowered to serve in the likeness of Christ. Our offerings give expression to living in God's holy purposes. Let us give with faith.

Offertory Music : "His Eye Is On the Sparrow" Charles H. Gabriel. Arr. Pepper Choplin
Doxology

Prayer: Thank you, God, for the mighty works of your grace among us. Thank you for the salvation of Christ and the life of the Spirit. As we offer you our gifts and our lives, bless them for the work of ministry among us and beyond us. May all we do bring glory to you, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Communion

Hymn: As We Gather at Your Table NCH 332

Invitation

Great Thanksgiving

Consecration and Service

Prayer of Gratitude

Lord Jesus, we have received your word and tasted your grace. Now may your Spirit strengthen and guide us as we seek to live as your disciples and servants in the world. Amen.

*Hymn Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness NCH 286

***Common Commission**

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

***Benediction**

Go now into the world

For God has established us in Christ, sealing us with the eternal pledge of his Holy Spirit.
2 Corinthians 1:21-22 adj

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude "Wonderful Peace" W.G. Cooper. Arr. Mark Hayes.

music provided by Chris Harris and Lynne Walker