

“Pentecost”

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Opening Prayer

Good Morning, and welcome to what will be the last of the sermons we do exactly like this. Starting next week we will begin going back and forth between our two churches, worshipping in a drive thru manner. Each service will be at 10am, and it will be combined. You can still find the sermons on here, but you will notice that the format is going to be different since I'll actually be preaching to folks in person once again. You hopefully have already received an e-mail, a letter, or the newsletter detailing all this. If you have not, you will this week. But in regards to our last Sunday in this format, it is actually a very special Sunday in the church calendar. Today we celebrate Pentecost.

The first question that we have to answer is, “what is Pentecost?” Simply put, it is the day in the church calendar where we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples following Jesus’s ascension. Why is this important for us, and worthy for us to celebrate? Well in addition to remembering what happens in Acts we also acknowledge and remember that we too have been gifted the Holy Spirit, which is no trivial thing. To understand this gift, the Holy Spirit, that we have been given, we do have to understand where He comes from and what He looks like. To do that we find ourselves in the book of Acts.

Our first reading from Acts 1:7-8 is potentially the final thing that Jesus says before He ascends into heaven. (It is the last here in Acts, but Matthew 28:18-20 are potentially His final words too. They are both very similar either way.) His disciples, who have followed Him for years, have seen Him die and rise again, and have seen untold miracles, are told by Jesus to do something very specific in the lead up to our first verses. In Acts 1:4 He tells them to remain in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit. When the disciples question what is next He then says what we read today “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” He is telling them that they will receive the Holy Spirit, and that with the Holy Spirit within them they will bring salvation to all who would hear everywhere.

Being 2,000 years later, we can see that Jesus’s commandment to the disciples has really been taken to heart. You can find Christians in every corner of the globe. Jerusalem, Baghdad, Beijing, Paris, Accra, Sao Paulo, and Washington D.C. all have churches present. From the Serengeti to the Andes to the Mongolian Steppes to the fields of Dodge county people are worshipping the risen Lord. What unites us as the church across the world is He who we worship who also inhabits us, the Holy Spirit. When the disciples hear this command they

couldn't have possibly known just how wide and wonderful God's plan really was. But they did get a taste on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon them... and many others.

Acts 2:1-3 read "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them." If you were to look throughout scripture for instances when the Lord's Spirit rested upon an individual, it looks a lot like this. By the Lord's Spirit, by the way, the scriptures are referring to when the Lord is at work within a person. When Moses encounters the Lord for the first time the Lord appears in a burning bush the Lord shows up in fire. Later when the Lord's Spirit rests upon Moses at Mount Sinai, he comes down from the mountain glowing. When Elijah hears from the Lord in the wilderness, the Lord speaks to him through a quiet voice in the middle of a great thunderstorm. The Spirit that is given to Jeremiah to prophesy is described as a burning within his bones, so great that he cannot hold God's words in. The difference is that when the Spirit shows up in the Old Testament, as in those instances, it is usually a temporary thing that is given to great people rather than common folk. Here, in the book of Acts, it descends upon each of them who are present, which is noted in Acts 1:15 as being about one hundred and twenty people. In verse four we read "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." The key point there? It actually isn't that they spoke in tongues, it is that they ALL received the Holy Spirit!

When Pentecost comes, one of the results of all these disciples receiving the Holy Spirit is that they start speaking in tongues. Now we aren't going to get into the gifts of the Spirit here today (things like teaching, preaching, prophesying, speaking in tongues, etc.) but we should mention at least that speaking in tongues is one of the things that CAN (not definitely!) be given as a result of the Spirit. This isn't something that is used, by the way, for any reason other than to bring glory to the Lord. Here it certainly does bring glory to the Lord, as we see people from all over the Roman world hear the Gospel preached in their own language. Verses 9-12 read "'Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs... and we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.' And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'" Again if you were to look throughout scripture you would see at least one other instance where something similar to this happened. The Tower of Babel, in the book of Genesis, is where scripture says that humans were scattered to the four corners of the globe and began speaking different language. Here it begins to reverse, and all the corners of globe by the grace of God are returned to the fold through the Gospel. However, some of the people who were watching figured it was just a bunch of drunk guys and that it wasn't the Spirit, but Peter puts them to shame and answers the question that is asked... "What does this mean?"

The Apostle Peter gave the people who were present, and by extension us, insight into what was happening on Pentecost in verses 14-21. (He actually continues on to give the basic Gospel in verses 22-36, which we did not read but you certainly should after the sermon is finished.) He begins in verse 15 by stating the obvious “For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day.” That would be 9am, and 120 drunk people at 9am is highly unlikely. Moving beyond that, his explanation is wonderful because it explains exactly what has happened and it comes from an indisputable piece of the Old Testament, which these people would have known. Peter reminds everyone that the prophet Joel, by God’s guidance, had stated that the Holy Spirit would show up in just this manner.

“And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall dream dreams; even on My bond slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.” Those words, from verses 17-19, are a direct quote from the prophet Joel. The Holy Spirit, God dwelling within us, was told would come in a great manner to God’s people. Jesus Himself told the disciples many times before He ascended that He was going to send the Spirit amongst them, and this is exactly what it looks like. Great wonders would be done, prophesies (which by the way doesn’t usually mean predicting the future, but rather interpreting the present), visions, dreams, etc. But the most important part of the Holy Spirit coming among the disciples, and us, is not these things... it is the last part that Peter quotes from Joel in verse 21. “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Beloved Congregation, we can and to some degree will, talk forever about the effects that the Holy Spirit being among us has. We can and do talk often about guidance that the Lord gives through the Holy Spirit. We can and do talk often about the comfort that comes from being with the Lord 24/7. But the greatest thing that comes is the salvation that is present by the Lord’s plan, Christ’s death and resurrection, and the Holy Spirit’s embodiment within us. The greatest thing is salvation. The result of Pentecost in the book of Acts is that on the same day Peter preaches this stuff by the Spirit three thousand people were baptized into the faith. The result of Pentecost in our day is that several billion people call Christ king. Every corner of the globe (and soon every tribe, tongue, and nation!) has a church. Even in the middle of persecution and pain, Christ’s reign has spread and many have been saved. Beloved Congregation, the wonderful thing about Pentecost, the reason we celebrate it and rejoice over it on a yearly basis, isn’t because it was a remarkable thing that happened in scripture. (Although that is true.) We celebrate Pentecost, we remember it and rejoice over it because it is the fulfillment of that promise that God has given us long ago. If we cling to Him, if we follow Him, then He will walk with us always in this life and in the next. As we end our sermons in this manner and look forward to worshipping in person again, we should also remember that we

have much more to look forward to as a part of the Lord's kingdom... and we should spread that joy.

Go forth this week in prayer for your brothers and sisters in Christ as we move towards outdoor worship. Spread the Gospel as Christ has commanded you. Rejoice this week that the Lord has given you His Holy Spirit, and along with it, eternal life. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer