



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
on
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Living Hope."
(Pentecost, 2026)
"The Power of Hope." Text(s): *Acts 2.1-21*.

☐ Day #1—Monday, May 25^h. Read: Acts 2:1-4. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

The day of "Pentecost" was originally an annual Jewish feast that followed the "Feast of First Fruits," also called the "Feast of Weeks" (Leviticus 23:15-22). The name "Pentecost" comes from the Greek word "*pente*" meaning "50," because it fell 50 days after Passover. In New Testament era, Pentecost also commemorated Moses' giving of the Law on Sinai. Pentecost was one of the three, annual *pilgrimage* festivals in Judaism, which required physical attendance in Jerusalem and the Temple. Consequently, during the festival of Pentecost, many pilgrims from throughout the surrounding empire would come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast and offer sacrifices.

In these verses from Acts 2, we see the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. While the Holy Spirit had been active prior to Pentecost, for example, present at Creation (Genesis 1:1–2), in Old Testament history (certain individuals and/or groups... Judges 6:34; 1 Samuel 16:13), and in the life and ministry of Jesus (Luke 1:30–37; 4:1, 14; Acts 10:38), now there would be two changes: First, the Spirit would dwell *in people* and not just come to them. Second, the Spirit's presence would be permanent, not temporary (John 14:16–17). The Holy Spirit could not have come sooner, for it was essential that Jesus die, be raised from the dead, and ascend back to heaven before the Spirit could be given (John 7:37–39; 16:7ff). God's plan of salvation was being fulfilled!

Today is Memorial Day. The day we honor and thank our Lord for all those who have sacrificed for our Country, our freedoms, and for the faith we share. Many men and women fought and sacrificed their lives for our Country, because they believed that the very freedoms we share come from God's providence and sovereignty. We thank our Lord for their commitment and love for God and for our Country!

Question/Reflect: "Pentecost likely also commemorated the giving of the Law on Sinai, as later rabbis attest. On this new day...God's people are publicly formed through the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. They acquire the names "Church" and "Christians" in the NT but also stand in faith with believers of the OT, who trusted in the coming Savior."¹

☐ Day #2—Tuesday, May 26^h. Read: Again: Acts 2.1-4. —Examine: The Text and its Message.

As we continue our exploration of the day of Pentecost, notice there was the visible manifestation that seemed like tongues of fire. The symbol of fire is multivalent in scripture. On Mt Sinai (Exodus 19:18), the fire on the mountain represented the presence of God there, perhaps the tongues of fire here are similarly representing the divine presence, for the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Likewise, several times in the Old Testament, God displayed Himself in the form of flames (Genesis 15:17; Exodus 3:2-6; 13:21-22; 19:18; 40:38; Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16). The tongues of fire would also symbolize the powerful witness of the church that was to be given to all people. Campbell Morgan reminds us that our tongues can be set on fire either by heaven or by hell (James 3:5–6)! Combine wind and fire and you have...a blaze!

Finally, and related to the "tongues," the disciples were speaking in "*other tongues*." This is not the "speaking in tongues" referred to as "*glossolalia*," as described in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. These "tongues" were the recognized "native languages"

¹ *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

of visitors who had come to Jerusalem for the festival (v. 8). As I mentioned above, Jews from all over the empire would be in Jerusalem for Pentecost, and, hearing the apostles speaking *in their own languages* would have astounded the people! This sign was the indication that the Gospel message would be proclaimed in *all languages* for *all people*. While some commentators do suggest that these tongues of fire in this passage were the ecstatic, prayer speech normally referred to as “speaking in tongues,” the bulk of the evidence would favor earthly languages.

Most importantly, this event marked the beginning of the church. Up to this point, the church was anticipated (Matthew 16:18). Now, the church will be a gathered body by means of the Holy Spirit through baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13; Matthew 28:19-20). After Pentecost, the Spirit will dwell in every believer as well as in the gathered church (1 Corinthians 6:19) as we live in fellowship with God. The Spirit will fill and empower us. When the Spirit does fill and empower the church, we are enabled both to serve God in our lives and to grow in our knowledge of faith (Galatians 5:19-23).

Question/Reflect: “Luke describes the scene with a comparison. The emphasis in the wording is on the mouth (“tongue,” “speak,” “utterance”), which may indicate where the “fire” appeared (see Moses’ appearance in Ex 34:29). The fire appropriately appears as tongues of flame, since the Holy Spirit works through the apostles’ speech. In the OT, angelic spirits were described as fire (see note, Ps 104:3-4). Fire also represented the presence of God’s Spirit (Ex 3:2-4).”²

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, May 27^h. Read: Acts 2.5-13. –Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Luke tells us that the people in Jerusalem were observant Jews “from every nation under heaven.” These devout Jews are described as “staying” (or “dwelling,” RSV) in Jerusalem. This makes the miracle of the various languages more understandable. As J.B. Polhill notes:

The miracle was a demonstration of the Spirit’s power and presence: these Diaspora Jews heard their own tongue spoken (not Aramaic or Greek) and realized that this should have been impossible for the “Galileans.” This “sign” prepared them for Peter’s speech, which probably was in Aramaic and which they indeed understood...They were “utterly amazed” (“astounded and amazed”), not at what the Christians said but that such simple Galileans would know their languages.³

The amazement of the crowds turns also to confusion. Just how were these men speaking in these languages and why are they so “excited?” As is often the case, when people have no understanding of a super-natural event, they turn to their own explanations, even making things up! In this case, many thought these men were drunk!

Here for the first time appears a motif that runs throughout Luke-Acts—in itself, without the element of personal faith and experience, even the most profound aspects of the good news are not self-confirming but can lead to skepticism and even rejection (cf. Luke 24:11; Acts 17:32; 26:24).⁴

Finally, another common interpretation of the “speaking in tongues” is the reversal of the Tower of Babel. Again, Polhill:

This view sees the disunity of humanity that resulted from the many languages of Babel being overcome by a new language of the Spirit, which brings a new unity. Jewish tradition maintained that all people, and even the animals, spoke one common language in Eden. It was lost by the animals in Eden and by humans at Babel but will be restored at the end time...The Spirit does unify humanity around the lordship of Christ, and that is a major message of Acts and even of this immediate context (cf. 2:41-47)⁵

Question/Reflect: “These groups, coming from all corners of the earth, point forward to the universal character of the Church. Twelve diverse regions signify all people. The Jewish Dispersion had spread to all these places...The mention of the capital city of Rome represents the empire, which encompassed the known world...Jews and proselytes...Represents all worshipers of the God of Israel, whether ethnic Jews or Gentile converts...Cretans and Arabians...Has the sense of all from west and east, from island and mainland.”⁶

2 Ibid.

3 *New American Commentary*. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992).

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

□ **Day #4--Thursday, May 28th. Read: Acts 2.14-17.— Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Peter now begins to preach, starting with a rejection of the assumption of the crowds: The men are not drunk—it is only 9:00 am! (Literally, “the third hour of the day;” “days” began at 6 A.M.). New Testament commentators Walvoord and Zuck describe what is really happening...

Instead of being drunk the believers were experiencing what was described in Joel 2...Pentecost fulfilled what Joel had described. However, the prophecies of Joel quoted in Acts 2:19–20 were not fulfilled. The implication is that the remainder would be fulfilled if Israel would repent.⁷

This text also shows us another result of Pentecost: The preaching of God’s Word!

Peter was the one to preach the first Christian sermon! The one who denied knowing Jesus three times (cf. Luke 23)! Peter’s change from cowardice and denial to boldness and spiritual insight is another evidence that the age of the Spirit had dawned with life-changing power. This is his first recorded sermon in Acts. It shows us the content and emphasis of the preaching of the Apostles. These apostolic sermons form an important part of Acts.⁸

Question/Reflect: (Martin Luther): “When God wanted to spread the gospel throughout the world by means of the apostles he gave the tongues for that purpose [Acts 2:1–11]. Even before that, by means of the Roman Empire he had spread the Latin and Greek languages widely in every land in order that his gospel might the more speedily bear fruit far and wide” (*Luther’s Works: American Edition*: 45:359).⁹

□ **Day #5— Friday, May 29th. Read: Acts 2.17-21.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The phrase “in the last days” reflects Old Testament language associated with the days before God brings in the new heavens and new earth. This includes...

...the Messiah’s victory and impending ultimate judgment of all, demanding that everyone repent (Num 24:14–17; Deut 4:30; Joel 2:28–29; Dan 7). It marks the time when God will establish His kingdom over the earth and end oppression (Isa 2:2; Joel 2:28–29; Dan 2:28). The events of Pentecost demonstrate to the Jewish audience that the promises made to them are fulfilled in Jesus, who is the true Messiah, and that the time of the last days has begun.¹⁰

The super-natural signs described by Peter, likewise reflect the cataclysmic reality of God’s future judgment. The coming of the Holy Spirit is the inauguration of the coming new age, with the supernatural phenomena described in Joel (and quoted by Peter), describing the conclusion of the present fallen and sinful age when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead!

Peter quotes Joel’s prophecy to state that the decisive stage and climax of history has arrived with Christ and the Church (cf 1Co 10:11; Heb 1:2; 1Pt 1:20) ...pour out My Spirit...God gives His people not just things, but Himself in the Third Person of the Godhead. The promised Baptism with the Spirit was “poured,” showing that the term “baptism” was not regarded strictly as immersion...all flesh...God’s salvation is universal in scope; He pours out the Spirit on all kinds of people.¹¹

Instead of a military, nationalistic-focused...coming of the Messiah, there are two comings. The first coming was the incarnation of deity in the conception and birth of Jesus of Nazareth. He came as the non-military, non-judicial “suffering servant” of Isa. 53; also the mild rider on the colt of a donkey (not a war horse or kingly mule), of Zech. 9:9. The first coming inaugurated the New Messianic Age, the Kingdom of God on earth...What believers do anticipate is the glorious coming of the resurrected King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the expected historical fulfillment of the new age of righteousness on earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10) ...God will set it all straight. Fellowship between God and mankind made in His image will be restored. Evil will be judged and removed. God’s purposes will not, cannot, fail!¹²

7 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

8 R.J. Utley. *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts* (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2003).

9 Quoted in, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

10 *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2012).

11 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

12 Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*.

Why did Peter quote from the book of Joel at this time and on this day (Pentecost)? For Peter, Pentecost revealed the promised universal pouring out of the Holy Spirit! Now, all people (Jews and Gentiles), have access to the Father through the Messiah, Jesus. Verse 21 was the most important verse for Peter:

“Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” For Peter the “Lord” in the context of this sermon was Jesus Christ. Everything that followed in the sermon—Christ’s death, his resurrection, his exaltation—pointed in the same direction. Whoever calls on his name, whoever confesses him as Lord, will be saved. Appropriately, Peter concluded his appeal with this same theme of calling (v. 39).¹³

Question/Reflect: “The Holy Spirit descends as a gift, sounding forth one message in many tongues, showing that Israel will soon burst its ethnic bounds. Cynics of all eras belittle God’s mighty deeds and explain them away. However, humility before the Holy Spirit is in order, along with sheer wonder that God gives Himself to people of all nations... [Pray]: ‘Come, holy Fire, comfort true, Grant us the will Your work to do. And in Your service to abide; Let trials turn us not aside. Amen.’” (*Lutheran Service Book* 497:3)¹⁴

□ **Day #6-Saturday, May 30th. Read: Again: Acts 2.1-21.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.** In 33 A.D., when Jesus died on the cross, rose again and then ascended back to heaven, there were only a few disciples; roughly about one hundred and twenty believers when Jesus ascended to heaven. However, within three hundred years, those 120 believers had dominated the Roman Empire. Even Caesar became a Christian. It became the official religion of the entire known world. How did that happen? How did the church grow from just a few people to the dominant faith in the Roman Empire and now to approximately over 2 billion people? The answer has been our focus this week: Pentecost! The “birthday” of the church! As you read Acts 2, you discover six characteristics of *true* Christianity:

1. Christianity Has Supernatural Power.

Christians do not just talk about God—we experience God. This is what makes the church different from every organization. We have the Holy Spirit. No other organization is established and characterized by the power of God! God’s Spirit creates, sustains, and empowers individual disciples and the corporate church.

2. Christianity Uses Everybody’s Language.

Pentecost was a sign, the fulfilled promise that all nations would understand the Gospel message. Christianity is meant to be a worldwide family of God!

3. Christianity Uses Everyone’s Gifts.

It uses everybody’s gifts and we all have different gifts. In the church, there are not to be “audiences;” there is supposed to be an “army.” There are not to be “spectators;” there is to be only “participators.” There should not be any “consumer” Christians who come to church, listen, go home and do nothing about it. Christians are to be “contributors.”

4. Christianity Offers Life-Changing Truth.

Real Christianity offers life-changing truth. Real truth transforms. God’s Word changes us. God’s Word has power!

5. Christianity Provides Loving Support.

The early church was known by their love for each other. They took care of each other. They cared for each other, often because many were being persecuted and killed by the Roman Empire. Therefore, the church banded together and took care of each other. They loved and they supported each other. We must do the same!

6. Christianity Enjoys Joyful Worship.

Worship is a celebration. In the corporate worship of God’s people, God *serves us* through His gifts of Word and Sacrament! That should give us joy!

Question/Reflect: Does the above characteristics reflect your understanding of Christianity? Why/why not? Would you add any descriptors?

13 *New American Commentary.*

14 Quoted in, *Lutheran Study Bible.*