



The Day of Pentecost

Acts 2:1-41

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Feb. 1st, 2026

**This original sermon was not written by A.I.*

Last week we started a new series called “Church Afire,” going through parts of the Book of Acts, and we’ve come to chapter 2—the all-important chapter 2—the Day of Pentecost.

The Day of Pentecost is originally a Jewish festival called the Feast of Weeks, marking the end of the grain harvest. Per Lev. 23:15-16, the festival entailed presenting a grain offering of new grain to the Lord, among other sacrifices. The Day of Pentecost is now more commonly associated with Christianity. It is the day the Holy Spirit came to permanently fill all believers, regardless of their ethnicity.

Now, up to this point in world history, the Holy Spirit only rested upon select Jews, such as kings, prophets, priests, and leaders, and it was a *temporary empowering* of the Spirit for specific tasks of service to the Lord. The Holy Spirit did not dwell within all believers before the Day of Pentecost. So, the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell permanently within all believers on the Day of Pentecost was a monumental shift in the way God interacts with his people. There may be some correlation to the new grain in the original Day of Pentecost—perhaps the new ethnicities brought into the kingdom of God.

The Day of Pentecost was also the beginning of the Christian church. Jesus was the envisioning founder of the Christian church, but the Holy Spirit brought the church to life ten days after Jesus left the earth. The Holy Spirit caused the church to grow, and the Holy Spirit sustains it throughout history.

Now, I know many of you have had a profound experience with the Holy Spirit in the past. I also know, for many others, the Holy Spirit is a mystery. You might be confused or wonder what the Holy Spirit is all about. You might even be a little frightened, or worried that if you dive too deep into the Holy Spirit, you’ll be forced into something that freaks you out. Maybe you saw a supposed outpouring of the Holy Spirit where people were doing all kinds of strange things and you thought, I don’t want any part of that! Maybe you’re wondering what in the world being filled with the Holy Spirit means! Well, that very question was asked by the crowd on the Day of Pentecost. They stood amazed and asked, “what does this mean?” That’s the question we’ll look at this morning... “What does this mean?”

So, let’s read the passage—I invite you to turn to Acts 2:1-41. This is a much longer passage than I would normally read for a sermon, but I wanted to include Peter’s sermon.

Acts 2:1-41

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.
 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?
 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, d 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome
 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”
 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

Peter Addresses the Crowd

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.
 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 “ ‘In the last days, God says,
 I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
 Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
 your young men will see visions,
 your old men will dream dreams.
 18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
 I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
 and they will prophesy.
 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above
 and signs on the earth below,
 blood and fire and billows of smoke.
 20 The sun will be turned to darkness
 and the moon to blood
 before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
 21 And everyone who calls
 on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ p

22 “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.
 23 This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. 25 David said about him:

“ ‘I saw the Lord always before me.
 Because he is at my right hand,
 I will not be shaken.
 26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
 my body also will rest in hope,
 27 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
 you will not let your holy one see decay.

28 You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’ y

29 “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
35 until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.” ’ m

36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ac 2:1–41.

The Word of God for the people of God.

Let’s pray.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the gathered believers in a mighty, rushing wind. Tongues of fire separated out and came to rest upon each individual. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them—meaning, they did not conjure this up under their own power. They were supernaturally enabled to speak in other tongues by the Holy Spirit.

Speaking in Other Tongues was the First Miracle The Church Experienced

This speaking in other tongues was the first supernatural miracle that the early church experienced from the Holy Spirit. You might be tempted to look on the surface and think, “well, being filled with the Spirit, then, must mean speaking in tongues.” A large part of the Pentecostal movement bases their whole experience on the evidence of tongues, which they believe is necessary for being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Well, the Scripture says that when they spoke in all these other tongues, they were unknowingly speaking in real languages, not meaningless babble. And it turns out that they were speaking about the wonders of God in all of these other languages.

As it were, there were no less than fifteen different languages represented in the gathering crowd. Verse 5 says that there were God-fearing Jews from every nation there. They heard the sound of the believers declaring the wonders of God in their own languages. They stood amazed and asked, “what does this mean??”

This First Miracle Meant that All People of the Earth May Receive the Holy Spirit

This first miracle of the Holy Spirit was not meant to tell us that being filled with the Spirit means first and foremost speaking in tongues. No, in this instance, it had the purpose of declaring the wonders of God to all nations—to all people of the earth. So, this initial miracle was introduced to proclaim to the world that all people of the earth may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and all people of the earth may experience and proclaim the wonders of God. The gift of tongues is a spiritual gift that has its place, but not as the first sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit, in my opinion.

The Holy Spirit coming in this way meant that God had poured his Spirit out upon all people, not just select Jews, but all people. And all people from every nation, every tongue, are now invited to receive the wonders of God, to receive the salvation of Christ, to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What Does This Mean? What Shall We Do?

I’ll explain further. The people stood amazed and asked, “what does this mean??” Some in the crowd said, “it means they’re drunk!” “Too much wine!” At this, Peter stood up and preached to the crowd, saying, “they’re not drunk, they’re filled with the Holy Spirit!” And he explained to them what the outpouring of the Holy Spirit means. And if you look at Peter’s sermon, his explanation points directly to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He points directly to Jesus as the risen Lord and Messiah. His explanation of what it means is that Jesus is alive!

His sermon was so compelling that the people asked, “what shall we do?” Or “how should we respond to this outpouring of the Holy Spirit?” And Peter said, “repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive this gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is not only for you, but for your children, and all your descendants who are far off.”

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit Means Jesus is Alive! So Repent and Be Filled!

My friends, first and foremost, and in spite of everything that you might have heard or known, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is all about witnessing to the truth that Jesus is alive. The Lord sent the Holy Spirit ten days after Jesus left the earth to attest to the risen Lord and to assure us that the living presence of Jesus is truly with us. And the right response is to his outpouring is to repent, be baptized, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Don’t let the filling of the Holy Spirit scare you or push you away. Don’t let these stories of speaking in other tongues scare you. The Holy Spirit is poured out upon you to first and foremost assure your heart that Jesus is alive and with you. Any true outpouring of the Holy Spirit will

always carry with it convincing proofs or the risen Lord. If you see a supposed outpouring of the Holy Spirit happening— a revival, so to speak— and it does not come with clear declarations and evidence that Jesus is alive, along with calls for repentance— if you don't see that as a driving force behind the revival— then you should question it. A true outpouring of the Holy Spirit will always, always, direct people to repent and declare that Jesus is alive!

That is number one. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit attests to the risen Lord Jesus, so repent and be filled!

The Spirit Living Within Us Means our Salvation is Assured

Number two, the Spirit living within us means that our salvation is assured. Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 in his sermon. Joel was the Old Testament prophet who prophesied about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He said, "I will pour my Spirit out on all flesh... and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The guarantee of salvation is one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit was poured out.

The scripture says that Holy Spirit is given as a seal of our salvation. Eph. 1:13-14 says, "when you believed, you were marked with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption..." Jesus called the Holy Spirit our advocate, our helper who comforts our hearts with the assurance that in the end, everything is going to be alright— in the end, everything is going to be well with us because in the end, we are saved. That is number two- the Spirit living with us means that our salvation is assured.

The Spirit Living Within Us Means We Have Power to Walk Away From Our Sin

Number three, the Spirit living within us means we have power to walk away from our sin. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, there is no power to overcome sin. The Holy Spirit enables us in our repentance, so he is working to bring us to repentance even before we repent. His work within us leads us away from sin and toward the fruit of righteousness. He gently leads us as we allow him to lead.

Galatians 5:16 says, "walk by the Spirit..." walk in step with the Spirit... take the Spirit's hand and walk with him... "and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." What does walking in the Spirit look like? Further down in Gal. 5:22, it says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Walking in the Spirit means producing the fruit of the Spirit.

We must remember that it's the Spirit that produces the fruit, not ourselves. We can produce all kinds of love outside of the Holy Spirit, but it will not be the Holy Spirit kind of love. We can produce joy, peace, goodness, every fruit of the Spirit outside of the Holy Spirit. Yet, without the Holy Spirit bringing it about, it's only a human kind of fruit, not an eternal, Holy Spirit fruit. We produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit by walking in the Holy Spirit. That is number three- the Spirit living within us means power to walk away from sin.

The Spirit Living Within us Means We Have Power to Be a Witness for Christ

Finally, number four, the Spirit living within us means we have power to be a witness for the living Christ. Specifically, the Holy Spirit empowers us for service to be an effective witness for

Christ. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit means that Jesus is alive, and the Spirit living within us means that we are then empowered to declare to the world that Jesus is alive through Spirit-empowered service.

In Acts chapter one, Jesus said, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses to the whole world.” The Holy Spirit empowers us with gifts and talents so that we will point others to Jesus through our work, and so that we will build up the church. 1 Cor. 12:4-6 says that the Holy Spirit provides his people with different kinds of gifts, different kinds of services, and different kinds of working. All for the common good, and all to build up the body of Christ so that the Lord’s name will be proclaimed in this world.

Each one of you, if you believe in Jesus, has a Spirit-empowered gift, service, or work that the Lord has blessed you with. And he works powerfully through you when you dedicate that gift, service, or work to the Lord to build up his church. The Holy Spirit empowers you for service, to be a witness to the whole world. Amen.

In closing, here are four key takeaways from this message:

1. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit means Jesus is alive.

Pentecost was not primarily about unusual experiences but about bearing witness to the risen Christ. Peter’s explanation of the Spirit’s coming pointed unmistakably to Jesus’ death, resurrection, and exaltation as Lord and Messiah. Any true work of the Holy Spirit will always direct people to the living reality of Jesus Christ.

2. The Holy Spirit assures believers of their salvation.

The Spirit is God’s promised seal and guarantee of our salvation. As foretold in Joel and affirmed in Ephesians, the Spirit comforts, assures, and testifies that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The presence of the Spirit within us declares that our future with Christ is secure.

3. The Holy Spirit gives power to turn from sin and walk in new life.

Freedom from sin can never be achieved through human effort alone but through walking with the Spirit. As we yield to the Spirit’s leading, He produces His fruit in us—love, joy, peace, self-control, and so forth—forming Christlike character and empowering true repentance and transformed living.

4. The Holy Spirit empowers believers to be witnesses for Christ.

The Spirit equips every believer with gifts, service, and strength to testify that Jesus is alive. Pentecost marked the birth of a Spirit-empowered church sent into the world. As we dedicate our gifts, service, and work to God, the Spirit works through us to build up the church and proclaim Christ to all nations.

Let’s pray.

<p style="text-align: center;">Study Questions <i>Read Acts 2:1-41</i></p>
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Observation Questions (What does the text *say*?)

1. When the Holy Spirit came, what were the immediate, visible, and audible signs that accompanied His arrival? (Acts 2:2-4)
2. What specific events did Peter highlight in his sermon to explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, particularly concerning Jesus? (Acts 2:22-36)
3. What was the crowd's response to Peter's sermon, and what did they ask him to do? (Acts 2:37)

Interpretation Questions (What does the text *mean*?)

1. Pastor Paul mentioned that some people might be "frightened" or "freaked out" by supposed outpourings of the Holy Spirit. How does Peter's explanation of the Spirit's purpose (pointing to Jesus, repentance, salvation) address these fears or misconceptions?
2. Peter tells the crowd that the promise of the Holy Spirit is "for you and your children and for all who are far off" (Acts 2:39). What does this phrase suggest about the inclusivity and ongoing nature of God's plan for the Spirit?
3. The sermon emphasizes that "any true outpouring of the Holy Spirit will always, always, direct people to repent and declare that Jesus is alive!" How might a small group discern if a spiritual experience or movement aligns with this core purpose?

Application Questions (How should the truth *change* us?)

1. The sermon states that the Spirit "seals our salvation" and provides "inward witness... that steadies hope when doubts arise." When was a recent time you experienced doubt in your faith, and how did you (or how could you have) leaned on the Spirit's assurance in that moment?
2. The sermon encourages us to welcome this gift, yield to its shaping power, and use whatever abilities we have for the building up of the church and the proclamation that Jesus is alive. What is one specific "ability" or spiritual gift you believe the Spirit has given you, and how can you intentionally use it for witness or service in our church or community this month?
3. The sermon highlights that the Spirit equips **each believer** for witness and service. If you feel you haven't identified your specific Spirit-empowered gift yet, what is one practical step you can take this week to explore or discover it?
4. The sermon emphasizes that the Spirit's presence is confirmation that Jesus reigns **now**. How does living with the conviction that Jesus reigns **now** impact your daily decisions, priorities, and interactions with the world around you?