

Pastor T.C. Arnold
Pentecost/Confirmation
Acts 2:1-21
June 4th, 2017

Today is the birthday of the New Testament Church. Pentecost, this day, marks the Lord's fulfillment of Christ's promise to send the Spirit to His disciples.

We call this a "birthday." However, we could also call it an "anniversary." Today we have an "anniversary in-the-making" for the seven confirmands that will receive the Lord's very body and blood at Holy Communion for the very first time. This is your Church anniversary. So, how fitting it is to have that anniversary of your confirmation on the very anniversary of the Church. It's very appropriate if you ask me. This will be a day you will remember. Perhaps you will get a gift with an engraving on it – with this day. You will get a certificate (a very nice one, I might add) with today's date on it. It will live with you from today forward. For those confirmed today, today will be your anniversary.

Now, for the rest of us, we know how to celebrate anniversaries. We celebrate by throwing a party or going out to eat. We celebrate by sending a nice thought in the form of a simple note or card. Perhaps we celebrate with gifts. This is the blessed 60th Anniversary of Christ Lutheran Church. It's also the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation – both of these celebrations will be in October. All month long we will have guest preachers, special presentations during Bible class hour with food. Also, Kansas City area wide Lutherans will have hymn festival at the Kaufmann Center for Performing Arts on October the 15th (watch for details regarding tickets). We know how to celebrate Anniversaries.

And, on this Anniversary, Church celebrates with the Word and Sacrament. The Church celebrates with a confession of faith, the choir singing and joyful hymns. The Church celebrates this day with a procession and confirmation. You can tell, the Church has a way to celebrate. All of these celebrations – Church anniversaries, school anniversaries (graduations), wedding anniversaries, and birth anniversaries – keep us focused on what is important to us. They keep our eyes on the precious things that God has put before us. And by the way, they are precious, maybe in a very different way, if we remember an anniversary of a tragedy as well. That too keeps us focused on what is important.

For the sake of all that is important, the Spirit keeps us focused. For the sake our celebrations of anniversaries like today, the Spirit keeps us focused. And today, the celebration is in full swing as we focus on how the Holy Spirit quite literally fell on to the Church. The Spirit comes and keeps us focused on the prize. That prize is Jesus.

And here is what is so important about anniversaries. It's what we hear at the very beginning of Acts chapter two: *"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

One place is where they were. They had a "place" in common. And so do we. I'm very grateful for that. God's people gathered in one place – receiving His precious gifts. Of course, we not only have this place in common but we also have this faith in common. That faith is confirmed upon us by the work of the Holy Spirit. We live in this Spirit of truth together – no wise

doubting but firmly believing that God's Word is truth. We have and celebrate and enjoy a Church together – Christ's Church. What a blessing.

And for that reason, we also share our Church – our “Christ-likeness” outside of this place as well. What does that mean? Well, I hope you know what that means. It means that our community established by Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit poured out on His Church goes beyond these walls. Kids, you are not just a Christian today. You will be, and have been, a Christian when you leave here as well. That means, you are a Christian when you have words to say to your friends. Choose them carefully. You are a Christian when you have an opportunity to set an example or help someone you might not like so much right now who is in need. Christians are not just Christians for an hour a week. Being confirmed in your faith today points you back to the Baptism granted to each of you a long time ago. This is the place where you began your faithful journey. The Lord began it in you – as you were brought to that font by the people who knew you would one day be here. That font is the place where our Lord poured out His goodness on you – not for just a time for your life – but for your entire life.

Beloved, when your days are lonely and sad, remember your anniversary. You are confirmed in the faith. That means you are not alone. Lean on those who are with you and who love you. You are loved. When you are hurt and despondent, you are not alone. The Church's anniversary day includes you and your fellow believers. The Christian Church and her anniversary are set before us as a reminder that we are included in the celebration. We are the ones who have an inheritance that will go far beyond this day and age. We are the ones for whom there is more. There is more than this fallen world. There is more for you.

Be confirmed in your faith on this special anniversary day. Be not confirmed in your sins. The confirmation today is your confirmation. You are confirmed into the Holy Spirit. To be confirmed in your sins would be to live as if Christ does not matter. To be confirmed in our sins would be to live as if you matter the most. Looking inward selfishly can divert our eyes away from living out this grand anniversary. That can be dangerous – so I not only warn those who are being confirmed this day – I also speak to all of you. Stay away from that which diverts your eyes away from the anniversary celebration of gathered guests. Jesus unites us by His saving grace in this world of staunch individualism, in this world of ideas that being independent means having no ties that bind us together. We need a common strand. We desperately need the more – the more that is Jesus, the Savior of your souls, in this world where so many of us find ourselves consumed with that which tears us apart. I need you, brothers and sisters. We need each other.

The believers were, “*Gathered together in one place.*”

That's real community. The “Gathered together” part as well as the “believers” part. This is so important. It's to this community of believer that are in Christ that are in life. Here is your sustenance for each day. Here is the place where the Lord makes you His very own. Here is the place we celebrate anniversaries. Here is the place where we truly celebrate life – life everlasting. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.