

June 4, 2017
 Sermon for the Day of Pentecost
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Acts 2:1-21

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. **3** And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. **4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. **6** And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. **7** And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? **9** Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, **11** both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” **12** And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” **13** But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Peter’s Sermon at Pentecost

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. **15** For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. **16** But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

17 “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;
18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.
19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.
21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Our God is a God of communication. He speaks to us plainly. It is because of this that the Bible and other materials are translated into the most obscure languages and dialects of our planet.

Nowhere do we see this more clearly than at the first Pentecost after Jesus had risen from the tomb. Oh, there were Pentecosts before that, going all the way back to Old Testament where the Jews celebrated the giving of the 10 Commandments 49 days after the Passover. It was originally known as the Feast of Weeks however the Hellenistic Jews used the Greek word for fifty, and it became known as Pentecost in the common language.

We mark this particular Pentecost as the birth of the Christian Church. This is now the ongoing work of Christ, to which Luke alludes in his introduction to the Book of Acts: *"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach"* (Acts 1:1).

The work of Christ continues now through the Church. And that work would require the ability to communicate Christ to the world in a manner that is clear and direct.

This sets up today's text for our consideration. Fifty days after Christ's resurrection, the followers of Christ in Jerusalem, gathered in a house. Some think that it was the same house where they had celebrated the Last Supper.

Our text doesn't tell us why they'd gathered, but some have suggested that since they were gathered it was most likely a worship service which would have included the Lord's Supper. Otherwise, why would the whole Christian community have gathered?

During this gathering, a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. They were gathered in the room and as our Text says, *"...suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

The sound was loud enough so that it got the attention of the crowds as the followers of Jesus were there praising God in loud voices. And miraculously, everyone in the crowd heard them speaking in his or her own language.

We don't know the mechanics of this, whether the apostles were suddenly speaking languages that they hadn't previously known, or if the people's ears miraculously translated the words into their own languages. We have no way to know this. But what is key is that they had perfect understanding. They were hearing about what God had done through Christ, and they were understanding it perfectly.

It's important to make clear that the tongues or languages here in our text were existing human languages. This is not some special Holy Spirit language. The text is clear on this point and even mentions several of the languages. V 6:

“Each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia’” and all the rest.

God is not a God of confusion. He does not want to create chaos. His desire is clear communication. God’s Word is talking about existing human languages.

Why is this important? Because faith comes by hearing the Word of God in a clear language that they can understand. The Church is the people of God—the believers in Jesus Christ. But believers do not exist apart from the hearing of the Word of God.

If people are not told about Jesus Christ and what Christ has done for them, they cannot believe it. So while the Church is the people of God, it never exists apart from the marks of the Church—Word and Sacrament. Without the message that Christ died on the cross for your sins, the Church does not exist. And so we see this at Pentecost. The crowd gathered because of the complex miracles that were taking place. The text says, *“All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’”* (v 12). And then Peter begins teaching and preaching the Word of God to them...and the Holy Spirit flows forth.

“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. . . . This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh’” (vv 14, 16–17).

Peter starts in the Old Testament and applies the Old Testament Scriptures to what Christ had done. Peter preached Law and Gospel to them in classic, Lutheran fashion.

When they understood what God had done and that they, because of their sins, bore responsibility for it, their consciences were cut open, as though they were a blister with salt rubbed into it. They asked Peter what they were to do, and Peter told them: *“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”* (2:38). We are told three thousand were baptized that very day.

Many churches in the past and today, try gimmick after gimmick to “grow” their church. But what’s all too often forgotten is what we see on Pentecost. The Church grows because people hear the clear, unadulterated Word of God. It is not a matter of some secret process. It is about communication.

God communicates to us through His Word, that is, through Holy Scripture. Any church growth that comes outside of God’s Word is a false growth, a temporary growth that cannot stand the assaults of the devil.

It worked that way for Peter. If Peter, an apostle, brought people to faith using the Word of God, how much more so will this be true for us today, who are hardly apostles!

God speaks to us in human language using words and sentences. God speaks in all languages. He is not like Allah, who can speak only in Arabic.

The Pentecost Text talked of “Arabians,” but also the languages of “Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene” (vv 11, 9–10). All heard clear preaching in their own language.

This, then, is the focus of what Pentecost is to teach us. Christ died on the cross and rose again from the dead to give us forgiveness of our sins and life everlasting.

That is the Gospel right there. Yes, generally we must prepare people for the Gospel by teaching the Law, as Peter did.

They must see that they’re sinners who need a Savior. They need to see that they, by their sins, participated in the crucifixion of Christ, God the Son.

But once they see their sin, they are ready to hear the Gospel message, that their sins are forgiven. It’s a message we all also need to hear on a daily basis.

For which of us is less of a sinner than anyone we see on the street? We also need to be constantly reminded that we have a Savior, Christ the Lord. And so, as this message is clearly communicated, the Church is established, built up, and sustained. *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (v 21).

Thus we see, from the beginning, from its very birth in this world on Pentecost, the Church is about the Word. The Word, the Scriptures, are at the center of everything.

It is that Word that clearly communicates to us all what God has done for us, that we have a Savior, Christ Jesus, by His death on the cross and His resurrection.

This is Pentecost: Clear communication that in Christ we do indeed have the forgiveness of our sins.

Amen.

And the Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

Pentecost Is Clear Communication:

In Christ We Have the Forgiveness of Our Sins.

Acts 2:1-21

- I. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit clearly delivered the Word of our salvation.
- II. Faith comes by hearing the clear communication of God's Word.
- III. The Word clearly communicates that Christ won our forgiveness when He died on the cross and rose again.

Question: "What is the day of Pentecost?"

Answer: Pentecost is significant in both the Old and New Testaments. "Pentecost" is actually the Greek name for a festival known in the Old

Testament as the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:9). The Greek word means “fifty” and refers to the fifty days that have elapsed since the wave offering of Passover. The Feast of Weeks celebrated the end of the grain harvest. Most interesting, however, is its use in Joel and Acts. Looking back to Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:8–32) and forward to the promise of the Holy Spirit in Christ’s last words on earth before His ascension into heaven (Acts 1:8), Pentecost signals the beginning of the church age.

The only biblical reference to the actual events of Pentecost is Acts 2:1–3. Pentecost is reminiscent of the Last Supper; in both instances the disciples are together in a house for what proves to be an important event. At the Last Supper the disciples witness the end of the Messiah’s earthly ministry as He asks them to remember Him after His death until He returns. At Pentecost, the disciples witness the birth of the New Testament church in the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell all believers. Thus the scene of the disciples in a room at Pentecost links the commencement of the Holy Spirit’s work in the church with the conclusion of Christ’s earthly ministry in the upper room before the crucifixion.

The description of fire and wind mentioned in the Pentecost account resounds throughout the Old and the New Testament. The sound of the wind at Pentecost was “rushing” and “mighty.” Scriptural references to the power of wind (always understood to be under God’s control) abound. Exodus 10:13; Psalm 18:42 and Isaiah 11:15 in the Old Testament and Matthew 14:23–32 in the New Testament are only a few examples. More significant than wind as power is wind as life in the Old Testament (Job 12:10) and as spirit in the New (John 3:8). Just as the first Adam received the breath of physical life (Genesis 2:7), so the second Adam, Jesus, brings the breath of spiritual life. The idea of spiritual life as generated by the Holy Spirit is certainly implicit in the sound of the wind at Pentecost.

Fire is often associated in the Old Testament with the presence of God (Exodus 3:2; 13:21–22; 24:17; Isaiah 10:17) and with His holiness (Psalm 97:3; Malachi 3:2). Likewise, in the New Testament, fire is associated with the presence of God (Hebrews 12:29) and the purification He can bring about in human life (Revelation 3:18). God’s presence and holiness are implied in the Pentecostal tongues of fire. Indeed, fire is identified with Christ Himself (Revelation 1:14; 19:12); this association naturally underlies the Pentecost gift of the Holy Spirit, who would teach the disciples the things of Christ (John 16:14).

Another aspect of the Day of Pentecost is the miraculous speaking in foreign tongues which enabled people from various language groups to understand the message of the apostles. In addition is the bold and incisive preaching of Peter to a Jewish audience. The effect of the sermon

was powerful, as listeners were “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37) and instructed by Peter to “repent, and be baptized” (Acts 2:38). The narrative concludes with three thousand souls being added to the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers, apostolic signs and wonders, and a community in which everyone’s needs were met.

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