

Trinity Lutheran Church, Gillette, WY
May 27, 2007

Come, Holy Spirit

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. The text for the Day of Pentecost is the Epistle, which was read earlier.

Today is the Day of Pentecost, a Jewish festival day celebrating the gifts of God. I might surprise many if I said that Pentecost was equally important to the Christian Church as both Christmas and Easter! Yes, we know that the birth of Christ was essential to our salvation, because if Jesus had not been born, He would not have been able to rescue us. Easter is also crucial in God's plan to save us because our Lord, through a cross, purchased our salvation by Jesus' shed blood payment for sin. Since Jesus is risen, we know His payment for sin was accepted. Easter Sunday provides all believers eternal life.

But Pentecost stands with Christmas and Easter as equally important. Why? Because, beginning with Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fills believers and spreads the Gospel! By the Spirit's power, all are made aware of the Gospel's saving power, and all can be drawn by the Spirit's action to Christian faith and service.

The Old Testament Feast of Pentecost was one of the three annual harvest celebrations of the ancient Israelites, along with the presentation of the first grain sheaf and the Feast of Ingathering, or Tabernacles, during the grape harvest in the fall. Grain in Israel is harvested in the spring, and on Pentecost the Israelites were expected to bring to the Lord the "*firstfruits of the wheat harvest.*" Pentecost was also one of the three great

festivals for which every Israelite was to assemble in Jerusalem.

Pentecost and the other spring festivals for the life of Jesus is noteworthy. On a day when Israelites were looking for a Passover lamb, Jesus rode into Jerusalem. On the day when the Israelites were concerned about slaughtering and eating their Passover lambs, Jesus hung on the cross as our “Passover lamb.” On the day when the Israelites brought the first sheaf of the grain harvest, the Sunday after Passover, Jesus arose from the dead as *“the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”* And on the day when the Israelites brought the firstfruits of their grain harvest to the Lord, the Day of Pentecost, the first ingathering of souls into the church took place.

Early in our text, we are told that when the Christians were together, *“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.”*

Three unusual phenomena accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—the sound of a violent wind, what appeared to be tongues of fire, and the ability to speak in different languages. What an exciting time that must have been to those present – to the listeners. So much so that the Holy Spirit really got into them and made them speak in all kinds of languages. But what a frightening time it must have been as well. To hear a sound like wind, but to have no wind blowing. To see what appeared to be tongues of fire appear on people. Finally, to hear people speak your own native language when just moments before, everyone spoke the same language. Truly for something like this to

happen, it must be the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, provides for us the same as He did at the first Pentecost: the power for Christian faith, life, and growth. Here, at the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gets the Good News out! In the Spirit's power, the message of Jesus Christ is presented clearly and effectively for the salvation of the whole world.

The Holy Spirit's miracle gets everyone's attention. The crowds hear the sound of a blowing, violent wind. At that moment, the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit. Awe-stricken, they stand in amazement. When others heard the sound, they gathered around where the people were, trying to figure out what was going on. Some responded with surprise. Some were “bewildered, amazed and astonished.” Even the devout Jews, for the most part, listened to the message. People started asking themselves who these people were and how can these Galileans know these languages. More importantly: what were the disciples declaring? What is it that they were saying?

Instead of listening to the words which the disciples were proclaiming, it was easy to dismiss what they were saying as mere gibberish. The disciples really weren't speaking in tongues and saying anything of merit: instead, they were drunken on new wine. Unable to comprehend the supernatural events which were taking place, they conjecture a natural explanation of the events. But it isn't gibberish that the disciples are speaking. It isn't drunkenness or any other natural explanation: it is indeed a miracle and Peter explains the miracle: a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

Peter explains that drunkenness is not the explanation for the disciples' behavior. *“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to*

my words.” This isn't the same Peter who was a coward, a denier, betrayer. Now, he is a powerful preacher with eloquence and confidence. There was no way that they could be drunk: it was only 9am. This was the time for morning prayers and sacrifice. No Jew was allowed to eat or drink before this time. When they did eat and drink this early in the morning, wine would not have been on the menu. In the morning, they would have eaten bread. Jews drank wine only with the meat, at the evening meal. The crowds are witnessing the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, the Spirit being poured out.

The Holy Spirit's amazing miracle is that languages are not a barrier to this day's Gospel proclamation. All hear “*the mighty works of God*” in their own tongue. But here lies the problem: these men shouldn't have known all these languages because they're all from Galilee. While they're from Galilee, that makes no difference. The Holy Spirit makes sure the Word of God will be effective. How long with the Holy Spirit do His Work? Until the end of time, until the Lord's Day.

The message which the Holy Spirit delivered that day has been and continues to be delivered today: the message of salvation that Christ has come! The message which was proclaimed in every tongue is one which we all understand: all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved!

The Holy Spirit draws hearts to faith. For one to call upon the Lord's name is to call Him to our aid. It is through faith given to us by the Holy Spirit that we recognize that He alone can rescue us from all that assails us. The message of Joel can be reduced to one simple statement: that salvation is available to everyone. With the Holy Spirit's work, God now stands in immediate relationship with His people. A new world was

presented to those devout Jews in Jerusalem, just as a new world is presented to all who have been called by the Holy Spirit in faith. Christians were confessing and continue to confess what they have seen and heard: the clear message that in Jesus Christ, all answers have been supplied for life today and eternal life as well.

The good news is that the power of God and the Word of God will triumph over all opposition. God will not, then or now, permit the message of His Son to be lost: the message that the Lord has provided life and salvation for us all in His Son, Jesus Christ, amen.

Now the peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, amen.