

May 27, 2007
Pentecost

"We Still Have the Holy Spirit Poured on Us"

ACTS 2:1-21

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. 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 them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 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." 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 men 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 heaven 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.'

I am holding in my hand a rock. If I drop this rock into a quiet pool of water, it will send out waves that radiate outward in circle, with the circle getting larger and larger and the waves getting smaller and smaller. If I dropped this into a lake that was perfectly serene, by the time the waves reached the shore you could hardly see them. If I take this tennis ball and let it bounce on the ground, it will bounce several times and then stop bouncing as the energy is dissipated.

Did this same thing happen to the Holy Spirit? Has the power and strength of the Holy Spirit that was unleashed on Pentecost gradually diminished in these last days of the world's history? No, dear friend, the Holy Spirit who empowered the disciples to boldly witness to Jesus' resurrection is still with us this morning. The power has not diminished like the power that diminishes and dissipates so quickly in the battery of your cell phone. The Lord our God has promised us, "In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people." The power was not intended to be there for just the disciples, but for all people who believe in Jesus and follow him.

The miracles are still happening

What a day the Lord chose to pour out his Spirit on his disciples, the day of Pentecost! This festival occurred 50 days after the Passover. It was the celebration of the spring harvest when the first grain was ripe. People joyfully brought their first fruits to the Lord. Estimates are that Jerusalem may have had 150,000 extra people for such festivals. What a great time to unleash the power of the Holy Spirit on the disciples so they could witness to the people gathered in Jerusalem.

"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting." There was the sound of the wind, a loud violent wind, but no wind. The people who came rushing to the sound of the wind saw tongues of fire resting on the disciples but the fire did not burn their hair. And they heard them speak in other languages, the different dialects and languages of people who had come to worship in Jerusalem, Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Cretans and Arabs. They listened to the disciples speak to them about the wonders of God in their own languages or tongues.

What if something similar happened to us this morning as we are sitting here in this worship service? There would be the sound of a loud wind, but no wind such as we are used to having here along the coast. This loud noise carries into the neighborhood. People start coming here to discover what that strange loud sound of wind is. Look out at the parking lot. See it fill with cars. See them walking and parking up and down the street. When they enter this building they are amazed to see people with tongues of fire on their heads and hear them speaking different foreign languages. The Hispanics would be delighted to hear us speaking perfect Spanish, and our Chinese neighbors across the street would hear us speaking perfect Mandarin. It would be the Holy Spirit's way of saying, "I am going to give you all the tools and all the help you need to bring the message of Jesus' resurrection to the whole world."

Wouldn't it be a blessing to us here in this congregation, if some Sunday morning the Holy Spirit would suddenly, miraculously, enable us, especially the pastor, to speak fluent Spanish? There would be no doubt in our minds what the Holy Spirit would have us do with this miracle. Some of us might want to get started immediately after lunch seeking out Spanish speaking groups in the parks, or certain neighborhoods, or markets on west main street and talk to them about Jesus. That was a special blessing in the early church. Today our missionaries go to language schools to learn foreign languages so the gospel can be preached in the language of the people. It is God's plan that "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Some people who heard the disciples speak in different languages made fun of them. They even accused them of being drunk with too much wine. It is easy to make fun of people we don't understand or if they are not one of us. Peter was not afraid to speak. He joyfully told his fellow Jews, "These men are not drunk as you suppose. It is only nine in the morning!" Then he explains how the prophecy of the book of Joel was fulfilled. "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people."

Today we hear people cry out, "Where's the power? I want to feel the power. I want to be in a church where the Holy Spirit is visible and people are speaking in tongues, and performing miracles, and prophesying about the future." When we were kids on the family farm, we played with the electric fence that kept the cattle in the fields. We touched a blade of grass to the fence and felt the tingling, and moved it closer and closer, to feel more and more of the power. Where's the power in the church today? We don't feel it. Where's the juice?

Has God kept his promise to pour out his Spirit on all people in the last days? Yes, he has. We see miracles all around us. We see people looking at letters that form words on the page of a book called the Bible. We see them coming to believe things that they once thought were foolishness and nonsense. We see the water of Holy Baptism connected with the word of God putting Christ on people. We watch in awe and amazement as people receive the body and blood of Christ with bread and wine as the words of Jesus are spoken, "This is my body and this is my blood." Miracles are happened all over the world as people who are dead branches are attached to Christ the vine and made alive in him. Immediately they start bearing fruit for the Lord that draws attention to Jesus and changes the world in which we are living. You know the fruits we are referring to. Galatians 5 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control." Who can say that these fruits of the Spirit are not drawing people to message of Christ and his resurrection just as the miracle of the sound of a mighty rushing wind, even when there is not wind to be felt?

I once knew a man named Chris who supported himself and his family by putting black sealer on parking lots. He did it by hand from 5 gallon pails of black coating. He was a devout Baptist man who spent Friday nights preaching on the street in Isla Vista at UCSB. He had four beautiful daughters who married missionaries serving in different parts of the world. I asked him if he ever saw anyone come to faith from his street side preaching. He smiled and said, "Turn on the television tonight to the religious channel and watch The Jerry Falwell Show. They are featuring some young preachers from the seminary. One of those young men stopped and talked to me on a Friday night. He had been drinking but I talked to him about Jesus. He contacted me the next day. The Holy Spirit brought him to faith. He went to Bible College and seminary and tonight is preaching." Think of how many miracles of the Holy Spirit you have seen in your lifetime. You are one of these miracles.

The message is still being proclaimed

Not only are the miracles still happening but the message is still being proclaimed. The disciples used their ability to speak foreign languages to talk about the greatest miracle the world has ever known, Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The people were amazed because they heard them speaking about the wonders or miracles of God in their own language.

This was no accident. This was part of God's careful plan to get the message out to the world. Peter quotes from the book of Joel to proof his point. "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, your old men will

dream dreams.” Even the lowly servants, both men and women, will have the Holy Spirit poured out on them. They will have visions and dreams.

What about these visions and dreams? When you become a Christian the Holy Spirit helps you see things with your eyes of faith that you would have never seen before you believed. You see with faith the love that your heavenly Father has for you. It becomes more real than the love any other person on this earth has for you. You begin to see with eyes of faith the place Jesus has prepared for you. The new heaven and new earth becomes more real than the current world in which we are living. You see the empty tomb of Jesus and the nail marks in his hands and hear him speaking to you personally, “Peace be to you.” The Holy Spirit has also opened your eyes to see something in your self that you would never be able to see on your own. He opened your eyes to see how empty, lost and helpless you are when it comes to solving your problem of sin and how far you have fallen short of God’s glory. You see with the eyes of faith the blood of Jesus washing you clean of all sin. These are the magnificent dreams and visions you share with other Christians. You want other people who don’t believe to share in what you believe.

Peter and the other disciples had the Holy Spirit poured out on them and they witnessed boldly to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Before ascending into heaven Jesus left this promise for his disciples and Christians of every age: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” We are living in the last days. We have come to the ends of the earth. In this final chapter of the world’s history the Holy Spirit is raising up people who will boldly witness to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. God’s plan is clear. “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” That plan involves using ordinary garden variety Christians like us.

This glove I am holding in my hand cannot do anything by itself. If a hand is placed into the glove then work can be done. So it is that the risen Lord and Savior wants to fill you with his Holy Spirit. The power that we see in the first Pentecost is a power that is still with us today. Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your power and pour yourself on us. Amen.