

May 11, 2008
Pentecost
Mother's Day

"We Have the Holy Spirit Poured Out on Us in These Last Days"

JOEL 2:28-29

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

I want to begin this sermon by rereading the first verse from our text in the King James Version of the Bible. "And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." What I miss in the NIV translation are the words, "It shall come to pass." Remember how the birth of Jesus was described in Luke 2, "And it came to pass in those days..." The prophet Joel tells us that in the last days as judgment draws near it will come to pass that the Lord will pour out his Holy Spirit upon all people. A young pastor was visiting an elderly member of his congregation and asked the man what his favorite verse was in the Bible. The man replied, "And it came to pass..." The youthful pastor said, "I don't quite understand." The man replied, "Some day you will."

And it came to pass. There is so much that comes to pass in one week of your life here on this earth. Think of all the things you did this past week, the words you spoke, the thoughts that came into your mind, the tasks you accomplished. So much is coming to pass as we listen to the news and realize we are in the last days. What we often don't see and appreciate is how much the Holy Spirit is being poured out on people throughout the world.

The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all people

Joel predicted the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all people." The Hebrew used here for "people" literally means "flesh." By calling people "flesh" the Lord is drawing our attention to how weak and corrupted our lives are. Isaiah 40 says, "All flesh is grass and all the glory of man is like the flower of the field." At the time of the great world flood the Lord said, "My Spirit will not strive with man forever for he is indeed flesh." The flesh that I was born with was corrupted by sin passed down from my parents. That is why Jesus said "Flesh that is born of flesh is flesh." Upon all of humanity that looks a rotting and decaying flesh, the Holy Spirit comes and brings life. Recall the vision Ezekiel had of a valley full of dry bones. When he started preaching God's Word to these dry bones they started rattling and coming together and developing sinews and muscles, and then they came to life. The Holy Spirit is bringing dead people to life throughout the world.

When Peter preached on the great day of Pentecost spiritual dead people were amazingly brought to life as he spoke to them about their problem of sin, about Jesus rising from the dead and the need to believe in him. The reason you believe this morning is because the Holy Spirit has brought you to life, or created faith in your heart to believe. What

happened to you is happening to spiritually dead people all over the world. Every person who comes alive after being dead can confess with Martin Luther, "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

The prophet Joel predicted that the Holy Spirit would not just be sprinkled on the people in the last days, but poured out on them. I can take water such as this and sprinkle it with my hand. Or I can pour it out all at once. The Holy Spirit is being poured out on people in places like India, Africa, South America, and China. Large numbers of people are coming to believe what we believe about Jesus, that he is our Lord and God and Savior. Some day in heaven we will stand shoulder to shoulder around the throne of the lamb with people from every nation, language, tribe and people. We will have one thing in common. Our lives have been changed by the Holy Spirit as we sing the beautiful song of salvation, "Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb."

The other day I was thinking about this word "pour." I remembered some of the thunderstorms and pouring rains I experienced as a child. It was not uncommon to hear someone say, "It is raining cats and dogs." Where did we ever get the expression "It is raining cats and dogs?" And then we had to endure the silly response, "I know I just stepped on a poodle." When Peter preached on Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured into the lives of people. 3000 people came to faith. In that amazing new congregation were people from all over the Mediterranean world who had to Jerusalem to celebrate the Old Testament harvest festival of Pentecost.

This huge outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not stop with the first Pentecost. No, the book of Acts says that the Lord added daily to church those who were being saved. If we do not see large numbers of people coming to faith around us, we can celebrate how the Lord is bringing people in other nations. Or we can celebrate how people are reaching other people one by one. Remember the poem of the blind men and the elephant. One thought he was touching a wall, another a rope, another a tree, another a snake. They could not see the big picture of the elephant. In these last days we need the Lord to send us his Holy Spirit to help us see how he is being poured out on all people. Amen.

The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all believers

When the Holy Spirit comes into the lives of people and brings them to Jesus, he also equips them to be witnesses and point others to Christ. The prophet Joel predicted how the Holy Spirit would enter into people and give them visions and dreams that could be shared with others. "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in the last days."

When you become a Christian the Holy Spirit leads you to prophesy or proclaim, and dream dreams and have visions based on what is you see and believe in God's Word not some inner mystical experience. In the Old Testament the Lord picked prophets like Joel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and he gave them certain words to speak. Now, in these last days, we have the Bible in our hands and we can take what we see here in God's Word and

speak it boldly to other people. Our eyes see things that prophets of the Old Testament longed to see. The prophets predicted the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. We have seen that birth with our eyes of faith. The prophets predicted a Messiah who would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Our eyes of faith have seen the cross on which Jesus died, the blood that was shed, the suffering he endured for our sin. The prophets predicted that Jesus would rise from the dead. We have seen the open tomb, and the grave clothes left behind, and heard Jesus say, "Look at my hands and my side."

On this Mother's Day we think of how the Lord has blessed us with Christian mothers who were filled with the Holy Spirit, and who wanted us to see what they had seen in the Bible. That is why our mothers and fathers took us to worship, read the Bible to us, and gave us Bible so we could read. They wanted us to see what they saw in God's Holy Word.

When I was a child my grandmother Schroeder lived with us about six months each year, and in her last years of life she spent most of the time at our home. Every night she would sit in her bedroom in her rocking chair and read the Bible. One day I went into her bedroom and opened the Bible that she was reading. I noticed how worn and used every page was. I had just been given my first Bible and her example led me to start reading my Bible a little each night before I fell asleep. I remember seeing something in the Bible that was so beautiful. It was the heavenly city of Jerusalem described in the Revelation with walls of precious stones and streets of gold and gates of pearl.

In our Thursday morning Bible study we spend some time looking at 1 Corinthians 2 which tells us how the Lord God pours his Holy Spirit into our lives and then lets us actually see things that are in the mind of God that ordinarily we would not see. Without the Holy Spirit our eyes cannot see the things God has prepared for us. Corinthians tells us, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." Ever see little kittens when they are first born. Their eyes are closed. They cannot see. But gradually in a few days their eyes begin to open and they can see. Human beings are born blind to God's love, and we cannot open our eyes to see the things of God. The Holy Spirit does this for us as we are told in Corinthians, "But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit."

In our gospel account for today Jesus said the Holy Spirit will "convict the world guilt in regard to sin and righteousness." The Holy Spirit convinces us of the truth that sin makes us unacceptable to God, and causes us to fall short of his glory. He shows us that our righteousnessness are like filthy rags before God.

It is the Holy Spirit who loves to bring us to see Jesus. Think of how close to Jesus the Holy Spirit has brought you in these last days. Listen to this amazing prayer that Paul offers in Ephesians 3 where he asks the Holy Spirit to help us see the full extent of Jesus' love for us. "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

"And it shall come to pass afterward..." It is going to come to pass. The Holy Spirit will be

poured out on people all over the world. Some will come to believe, and those who believe will have the Holy Spirit fill their lives to draw them closer to Jesus and help them witness to him. That's the blessing of the Holy Spirit that will come to pass in your life and mine this coming week. Amen.