

**May 27, 2012**  
**Pentecost**

*“Waiting for the Holy Spirit”*

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### **ACTS 2:1-21**

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**W**hen the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. <sup>5</sup> Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup> (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" <sup>12</sup> Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup> Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> "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. <sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. <sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. <sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

They don't look like much do they, these followers of Jesus, huddled together to mutually support and strengthen each other after Jesus ascended into heaven? They don't look like much do they? But don't let your eyes deceive you. These followers of Jesus are waiting for something to happen, something very special. They are waiting for Jesus to keep his promise to send them the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come to them. Right before he ascended into heaven he told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised... But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..." They knew it would be something spectacular but they never realized just how much the coming of the Holy Spirit would change their lives.

They don't look like much do they as they sit here on May 27, 2012 in this congregation on the Central Coast of California do they? Don't let your eyes deceive you. We are like the beloved disciples of Jesus who were in a waiting mode. We are waiting for the Holy

Spirit to come and fill our lives and lead us to boldly witness to our faith just as happened to the disciples. It is not a bad position to be in is it? As the Lord said in Zechariah 4:6: "Not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit." They don't look like much, but they are singing a song of hope, "Come, Holy Spirit."

### **The Holy Spirit came to Jesus' disciples**

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place." It was not a coincidence that they were all together in one place. They wanted to be together to mutually strengthen each other and support each other just as we do today. It is tough to be a solo Christian especially in these last days. God's Word encourages us "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting." I wonder what it sounded like. People have described a tornado as the sound of a train bearing down on you, or a jet taking off. When we were kids we used to stand beneath the iron railroad bridge that crossed the river on the family farm. The sound was so loud we could scream and not be heard. The sound of the Holy Spirit coming filled the house where they were sitting.

They knew it was Jesus keeping his promise to send the Holy Spirit.

The Hebrew word for Spirit is ruach, a word that means breath and even sounds like breath coming from your mouth. The Greek word for spirit is pneuma from which we get our English word "pneumatic" having to do with air. How fitting that the Holy Spirit comes with the sound of a mighty rushing wind because Jesus said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So is everyone born of the Spirit."

There is the sound of the rushing wind and now they see tongues of fire coming to rest on each of them. The tongues of fire rested on each of them. Each of them would be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak the Word of God boldly with fire and passion and zeal. In our recent study of the book of Nehemiah we read through the names of people who helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God put the names in their because every person is important in the kingdom of God, and every disciple is a valuable tool of the Holy Spirit to be used for God's glory and honor.

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages." This was not just mumbo jumbo or gibberish. They spoke in languages that visitors to Jerusalem were used to hearing in their hometowns. Jerusalem was filled with out of towners who had come to celebrate the early harvest festival of Pentecost, Parthians and Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia..." I wince every time my wife tries to say a few words in German that were passed down to her by her mother and father. I know my son Seth would wince if I tried to say a few words in Spanish. These people heard them speak their own language and dialect fluently. I would be a happy camper if I could wake up some morning speaking Spanish fluently.

And what do you do if you can suddenly speak in a language that you never spoke before? You open your mouth and start talking, not about the weather, or the problem with the Romans, but about Jesus. The crowd came because they heard the sound of wind and they rushed toward that sound just as people gather when something strange happens in the community today. Notice what these people heard in their own languages or dialects. They heard them talking about the wonders of God.

They heard them talking about the wonders of God. Why has the Lord allowed you to live on this earth? He has a plan and purpose for your life. He wants to use your mouth and your lips to let other people know about the wonders of God. He lets you share the wonders of God with your husband or wife, your children, your friends and neighbors. One of the names given to Jesus in the Old Testament prophet Isaiah was "Wonderful" which means "miracle." Everything about our God is a wonder. We marvel at the way he creates the world in which we live whether we are looking at an eclipse of the sun, or hearing some new discovery about the human cell. We stand in awe of how Jesus was born into this world. Our Lord and God came to be one of us with our skin, bones and hair and flesh. We stand in awe of our God who saw our hopelessly lost condition and took every sin we every committed and place it on Jesus and had him punished in our place. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead every day of our lives as we joyfully proclaim, "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Here I am born into this world foolishly thinking I can do something human to make myself acceptable to God and loved by him. God shows me my foolishness by opening my eyes to see how corrupted by sin I am in everything I do. He shows me the wonders he has done to save me and then calls on me and you to share these wonders with other people.

How do some in the crowd respond to what is happening? They make fun of Peter and the other apostles. They accused them of having too much wine to drink even though it was only nine in the morning. It will always be that way. There will be those who accuse you of being a total fool for believing the miracles of God have saved you and rescued you from your hopelessly lost condition. You joyfully wear the robe of Christ's righteousness as you rejoice in the hope of being forgiven and you despair of your own righteousness. Get ready to be laughed out of town and labeled a drunken fool. The world is so steeped in its self-righteousness it will stone those who dare to proclaim that righteousness and salvation are found only in Christ.

Peter stood up to witness to Jesus and his resurrection. He was not afraid to confess the name of Jesus boldly even if it meant they would take his life. This is a totally different disciple from the one who previously cursed and swore that he never knew Jesus. How could anyone change so drastically? First, Jesus forgave him for his sin of denial and then Jesus gave him the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Peter explains how this coming of the Holy Spirit was for all Christians and predicted in the book of Joel.

### **The Holy Spirit comes to us**

"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. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit and they will prophesy.'"

To prophesy means to proclaim the word of God boldly. It is not just great apostles like Peter and Paul or famous evangelists who stand up and proclaim the word of God boldly. Ordinary, every day, garden variety people like you and me who spend time in the word of God see things in that Word that they want to bring to other people. These dreams are not mystical revelations from God that we share with other people. These dreams are things we have come to see in God's Word that he reveals and makes known to us. Later Peter would stand up again and say to people, "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." Paul would write, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." Your eyes have seen the nail marks in the hands of Jesus and they are real to you. You cannot keep silent. You must speak.

The Lord our God will shake people up in these last days with signs and wonders in the heavens above and the earth below. "I will show wonders in the heaven above and the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will not be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The earth shakes and people are afraid. There are wars and rumors of war and people are afraid. Financial institutions fail and people are afraid. The housing market crashes and people are afraid. The Lord our God in his love and mercy shakes people out of their lethargy and false hopes. He allows them to experience near brushes with death because he wants everyone to call on the name of Jesus to be saved.

As the end draws ever closer, we find ourselves waiting for the Holy Spirit, not on the sidewalk with our suitcases packed with our eyes in the sky, but in our homes and at our jobs and in our community waiting for the Holy Spirit to come to us. Jesus told us to wait for the Holy Spirit. The Lord spoke to us, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people." Here we are privileged to have another day and another week to live life on the cusp of the Holy Spirit's blessing, just as Jesus promised. Amen.