

June 8, 2014
Pentecost

"Pouring Out the Holy Spirit in the 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.

We are living in the last days. That means Jesus could return at any time. When he comes he will destroy this world in which we are living, raise the dead, judge all people, and take us who believe in him to the place he has prepared for us. Before this time comes, our Savior will be pouring out his Holy Spirit on people throughout the world just as he did on the day of Pentecost. The last days will not be easy. Jesus warned about false teachers rising up within the church, an increase of wickedness, and the love of many growing cold. The worst of times can also be the best of times. Jesus assures us in Matthew 24 that as the end draws near "the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world."

Today is the Festival of Pentecost. It is a time to celebrate the good news that the Holy Spirit is with us in these last days. This great prophecy in the book of Joel is being fulfilled before our very eyes. The Holy Spirit is being poured out on people throughout the world and also on us in rich measure.

The Holy Spirit is being poured out in all the world

Listen again to these amazing words from the prophet Joel, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people." Peter used these words to defend the miraculous way he and the other apostles proclaimed the wonders of God in different tongues and languages. The critics accused them of being drunk after drinking too much new wine. He said, "These men are not drunk as you suppose. It is only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken about in the prophet Joel; 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.'" Imagine for a moment what it must have been like to have the Holy Spirit poured you on that first Pentecost. There was the mighty sound of a rushing wind. There were tongues of fire dancing on their heads but not burning their hair. And they began to speak in other languages as the Holy Spirit enabled them. And then, and then, and then they proclaimed the wonders of God with great force and power and conviction. They boldly witnessed to Jesus' resurrection from the dead and thousands came to faith that day.

Was this pouring out of the Holy Spirit an experience reserved only for the apostles on the day of Pentecost? No, dear Christian, the prophet Joel tells us that in these last days in which we are living we are going to see the Holy Spirit poured out on all people. This pouring out of the Holy Spirit is invisible of course, just as faith in the hearts of people is invisible. It is happening all over the world in the hearts of people where ever the message of the gospel is preached. Christians are boldly witnessing to Jesus and his resurrection from the dead. People who do not believe are coming to faith just as they did on the first

Pentecost.

If you could look into the hearts of people you could see the ones whom the Holy Spirit has brought to saving faith in Christ. Have you ever wondered about some of the new people you met this past week? Has the Holy Spirit come into their lives? What about the familiar faces you see in the stores as you shop or the familiar faces of people in your neighborhood or at your job? This life changing pouring out of the Holy Spirit is happening all around us even though we cannot see it happening. It is very powerful. People who don't want to trust in Jesus for their salvation are being led by the Holy Spirit to put their confidence in Christ for the forgiveness of their sin and a robe of righteousness that covers them.

There is something we can see in people and even in ourselves that shows us clearly how much we need the Holy Spirit poured out on us. When God looks at people he sees people as "flesh." That's actually the Hebrew word used here for people. This word is not a compliment of the human race but a condemnation. By using the word flesh the Lord is not calling attention to the great things people have done with the bodies and minds he gives them such as accomplishments in sports, or music or art or science or even just caring for one another. He is calling attention to our weakness, our failing, our sin. At the time of the great world flood, the Lord said, "My Spirit will not strive with man forever for he is indeed flesh." This a reference to the sinful flesh of the human race that produced people who were monsters. It says in Genesis, "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that ever inclination for the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the devil." Jesus said, "That which is born of flesh is flesh." The innocent face of the little child who is sleeping has sinful flesh that is capable of doing monstrous deeds.

I cannot see the evil in your heart that is a result of your sinful flesh and its evil behavior. I only know what I can see in my own heart. It is the Holy Spirit who shows us the depth of corruption within us to convict us and lead us to cry out to the Lord for mercy. Listen again to what Jesus told us in our gospel reading for today. He said the Counselor or Holy Spirit would come to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. The Holy Spirit is being poured out on people all over the world convicting them of sin and showing them their need of a Savior.

If you ever reach a point in your life where you do not desperately feel a need for Jesus and his forgiveness, then listen to what 1 Corinthians 13 says about love. "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth." Roll back the scroll of your life, look back into the deeper recesses of your heart, and think of those moments when you found delight in the sinful actions of others. The evening news has a way of sensationalizing the evil we see in the world because it somehow makes us feel better. If you ever passed on a juicy bit of gossip, or enjoyed hearing about another person's sin, or made some snarky comment about co-worker, you have delighted in evil. The Holy Spirit convicts us and we join the Apostle Paul in saying, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my flesh."

God's plan is to pour out his Spirit on all people all over the world not just to convict but also to comfort. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. He said of the Holy Spirit, "He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." I am disgusted by what I see in my sinful flesh, but I am delighted by what the Holy Spirit shows me in the flesh of Jesus. He took on my flesh and blood. "The Word became flesh."

His flesh remained pure from time he was born, to his childhood years, to his adult years, and even when he was being horribly mistreated by those who nailed him to the cross. It was in his flesh that Jesus suffered and died for my sin and the sin of the world. He even kept the nail prints his hands when he rose from the dead. The Holy Spirit directs your eyes to Jesus and he is your hope of peace with God. As Jesus said, "He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it know to you." The Holy Spirit says, "Everything Jesus has done for you is now yours."

All over the world, the Holy Spirit is being poured out on people so they come to know about Jesus before the world comes to an end. This past week our fellowship hall was used for elections. We had to remove the information we had posted on the bulletin boards. I took down this information we had received from the WELS about the message of the gospel being carried to the people of Pakistan. People in our national church are being used to bring the gospel to people Pakistan. Students from Martin Luther College are taking courses in Mandarin so they can spend time in China teaching English but then sharing the gospel. Dr. Steve Daugherty and I will be going to our district convention this afternoon. There we will hear reports how we are privileged to be part of this world wide out pouring of the gospel message, the fulfillment of these words in Joel.

The Holy Spirit is being poured out on believers

Now look at your personal life. Listen to what Joel says about the Holy Spirit being poured out on you. "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, you 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." The Holy Spirit spoke to the prophets through dreams and visions. Today the Holy Spirit speaks to us on the pages of the Bible and we see things that the prophets were not able to see. The prophets predicted the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus in great specificity. We can look back and actually see with our eyes of faith our Lord and Savior dying on the cross. Because the Holy Spirit is poured out into your life you are able to say, "Yes I was there." When we watch Peter and John go into Jesus' empty tomb we find ourselves standing right next them, looking at the grave clothes that were left behind. When we watch the disciples looking up as Jesus ascends to heaven, we can say, "I was there."

When little kittens are born into the world their eyes are closed. Slowly their eye lids begin to open they see. Without the Holy Spirit we are blind to God's love for us and all that Jesus has done to rescue us. But with the Holy Spirit we actually get to see things in the mind of God. God reveals them to us by his Holy Spirit. Here is an amazing prayer from Ephesians chapter that asks the Lord to use the Holy Spirit to help us see more of his undeserved love and kindness for us. Paul writes, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints."

Last Friday Sherman Brunssen and I went to the intensive care unit of the hospital to visit Gordon Hillberg who is recovering from open heart surgery.

His body was in great pain but his mind was sharp. It was Gordon who taught me about "fugitive information." When your brain is so full of information it can no longer remember what needs remembering. We shared a devotion from John 14 where Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit who would teach us all things and bring everything to our memory. We reminded Gordon of how blessed he was to have the Holy Spirit teaching him all things and then bringing them into his memory. He commented, "With the Holy Spirit there is no fugitive information." Praise God for the Holy Spirit that is being poured out into all the world in these last days. Praise God for the Holy Spirit being poured out in your life. Amen.