

John Makey

Christ Lutheran Church, St. Catharines, Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020

TEXT: Acts 2: 1-21 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." 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. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "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 in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will 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.'

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Lawrence of Arabia went to London following his exciting military life and took with him a number of Arab chieftains. It was their first trip outside the desert, and they were awed by everything they saw in the city. They were most impressed by the water faucets in the hotel rooms for they came from a barren desert land with little water, to a place where by turning a handle at any time water rushed out. After they left, the hotel management made a discovery. The Arabs had taken some of the faucets with them. They had dreamed of using them in their

desert homes; just turn the handle and get all the water you want. They didn't understand that you need a pipeline to bring the water.

Today is Pentecost, one of the major festivals of the Christian Church. Today is the day we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God's church, and we could even call it the birthday of the Christian Church. We are told in the book of Acts: *"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...And about three thousand were added to their number that day."* It is by the power of the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament that the Church of God is added to. It is also impossible for Christians to produce power and Christ-like qualities apart from being connected to the flow of power that comes from the Holy Spirit.

I have often felt that we in the Lutheran Church do not pay much attention to the working roll of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in our lives. We profess to believe in one God and the Trinity, three persons who are co-equal. So often we talk about the Father and the Son to the point of leaving out God the Holy Spirit. There is a song that goes something like this: *"It's my party and I'll do what I wanta"*. Basically the thinking is, this is my life, and I'm going to do with it what I want wanna! *"What's the Holy Spirit got to do with our lives anyway?"* When you get down to it, many of us behave as if we alone are responsible for choosing our direction in life, making decisions, and accomplishing our goals by our own power and ability without any help from the Holy Spirit. To a certain extent we are like Adam and Eve we have been given two trees to eat from: the tree of God's Word and the tree of what the world has to offer us. We seem to be real good at reflecting the secular spirit of society around us, and using our old sinful nature to do what we want not what God wants. That is why Jesus said he would send us a comforter and helper. He is the same comforter and helper that was sent to the 3000 on the day of Pentecost --- the Holy Spirit.

Luther's does a magnificent job in explaining to us the work of the Holy Spirit in his explanation of the third Article of the Apostles Creed: *"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as he*

calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the Last Day raise me up and all the dead, and give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life.” In this we need to remember that the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Holy Trinity, true God with the Father and the Son and therefore NOT MERELY the power or energy of God like some try to make Him out to be. His power is poured out on us through the three means of grace: **Holy Scripture, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion.** God’s power is poured out on us through these ways. The means of grace are the pipeline the Holy Spirit uses to flood our lives with God’s love. The Holy Spirit through the Word and sacraments freely gives to all Christians the most precious gifts: **faith in Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.** We need to rely on the Holy Spirit during this life if we want to live forever in the next. The Holy Spirit’s job is to bring and keep us close to God now, and keep us in our faith so that we may remain before God forever in heaven.

It is no accident that throughout Acts, Baptism and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit go together. It is also no accident that Scripture speaks about the Spirit being “*poured out*” in the Old Testament reference from Joel spoken by Peter here in our account of Pentecost: ***“God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people”***. This is exactly what happens in the washing of water with the Word (Ephesians 5:28). Jesus tells us that disciples are made by baptizing and teaching. ***“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*** So we see that the Holy Spirit works through Baptism and God’s Word. Romans 10:17 tells us, *“faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”* That is exactly what happened in our text from Acts when Peter spoke the word boldly, quoting from the Old Testament, many came to faith because the spirit worked through the Word of God.

Later on in chapter 2 of Acts in verse 42 we read: ***“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching*** (that’s the Word of God), ***to the fellowship*** (that’s gathering together), ***to the breaking of bread*** (that’s the Lord’s Supper), ***and to prayer.”*** The people Peter spoke the Word of God to were filled by the Holy Spirit, baptized, and gathered for the *“Breaking of Bread”* which is Holy Communion. The Holy Spirit continued to fortify the early Christian Church

through these means. Those people who cut themselves off from these three things, or as we refer to them as the three means of grace: *“Holy Baptism, God’s Word, and Holy Communion”*, are cutting themselves off from the Holy Spirit and from life itself. That is why it is so important in this covid19 times that we are presently in, that we take advantage of the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word as we read it in devotions, or hear it preached when we can through the internet, or on TV, or through the Lutheran Hour Ministries on the radio on Sunday Mornings, or whatever way we can read it or hear it. The one great blessing is that even being cut off from gathering together we still have our Bibles. For that we can thank the Lord, because in many communist countries for many years the Bible was banned, and it was even illegal to own or have one in your home. For many years those people were cut off from God’s Word except for what they might have memorized or remembered from earlier teachings. So as much as we miss coming to worship and gathering together we can thank our heavenly Father that we still possess and hear Holy Scripture through which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and minds. We need not despair but we can be encouraged by the comforter and counselor the Holy Spirit Himself that we are not alone in this time of upheaval in this world. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and gives us the hope and certainty that we are in the good and loving hands of our Good Shepherd and gracious and loving God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Our salvation lies in our God given faith that joins us to Christ crucified.. Our old man, our old sinful nature has been crucified with Jesus. The Holy Spirit effect a changes in us. We may not look different, yet we were utterly changed when the Holy Spirit brought us to faith in Jesus as our Saviour. This change is our new birth, our regeneration. We have been born again as Jesus tells Nicodemus in John chapter 3. What a joy it is today as we celebrate the feast of Pentecost, and as we talk about the power of the Holy Spirit, and how He brings new life and keeps/sustains that life in us. It makes us want to sing: *“Holy Spirit, light divine, Dawn upon this soul of mine; Let your word dispel the night, Wake my spirit, clear my sight. ... Holy Spirit, all divine, Dwell within this self of mine; I your temple pure would be Now and for eternity.” Amen.*

MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SUPASSES ALL HUMAN UNDERSTANDING KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.