



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

June 4, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

The Festival of Pentecost

First Lesson: [Joel 2:28-29](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 51b](#)

Second Lesson: [Acts 2:1-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 16:5-11](#)

Sermon Text: [Acts 2:1-21](#)

Testify To The Truth

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Reese's Peanut Butter Cups...I like them. But you know what I like even better? Holiday Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. Do you know what I like even better than holiday Reese's Peanut Butter Cups? Half price holiday Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. The day after Christmas you can go buy a whole cart load of those trees. They last a long time. Peanut butter wrapped in chocolate and shaped in a tree, that tastes better. Easter, what is it, eggs? You can go and buy peanut butter eggs. Now tomorrow we can all run to the store and buy doves, peanut butter filled doves, right?

Not really. The world doesn't celebrate Pentecost like we do, does it? Because of that sometimes maybe it's the forgotten festival for us as Christians. Maybe you were surprised when you got here this morning and there was red everywhere in the front of the church and you wondered what in the dickens is going on. Red is the fire of the Holy Spirit. That's why the paraments are red and you have a dove in the shape of a flame up above. We have candles. We have the tulle and the colors of flame all around to kind of remind us of some of these things that took place on that first Pentecost.

But for you and me as Christians, Pentecost...someone said to me this Thursday night after worship, Pentecost they said is probably one of the more important festivals for their daily life because of how they need the Spirit's help to live for God and to fight against all the temptations that surround us day after day. So today as we gather together, let's think about that, about Pentecost, about what God did then, what he is still doing today, and how God uses some images that are from everyday life at that time to remind us of what we are and what we are to be doing.

Pentecost was a Jewish festival. It was the festival of the harvest of grain. It took place in the Spring in Israel every year. It was one of three harvest festivals. Why did God have so many harvest festivals? I don't think God does things haphazardly like you might say about my sermons. God does things with a reason. So think about it. Harvest, why harvest festivals?

The first harvest celebration was the presentation of the first sheaves of grain that would come. That took place on the Sunday after the Passover. They would bring that. So 50 days after the Sunday after the Passover is the full harvest. They would have this celebration. Pentecost was also one of the three pilgrim festivals where you were supposed to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate it. Passover was one. Pentecost is one. The third harvest festival was the other one. The Festival of Booths or Tabernacles that was the grape harvest in the fall. So you have Passover and two harvest festivals that they had to make trips for.

Passover, the lamb, blood on the door post, the Angel of Death passed over them in Egypt, you remember that, right? So that and two harvest celebrations. I don't think God does things with coincidence, so think about this for a minute. Before Passover, before we celebrate Maundy Thursday, that was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, right? The Sunday before that, what is that called? Palm Sunday, right? We have the palms everywhere and all that stuff. Jesus is coming with all the pilgrims that are coming into Jerusalem for this festival celebration that they were supposed to come together to celebrate. All these crowds are coming in. These crowds didn't pack up the minivan, throw some coolers in the back, grab the Passover lamb and throw it in the back of the minivan and bring it there. So as they're there, they are coming into town, they are probably thinking "Where are we going to get a Passover lamb? We have to have a Passover lamb by Thursday. Put that on the to do list. We have to go get that Passover lamb." So as they're thinking about getting a Passover lamb, who comes into Jerusalem with coats and palms and "Hosanna to the Son of David"? Jesus comes in. I don't think it's a coincidence.

Passover...they celebrate to remember how God delivered them and Jesus then institutes the Lord's Supper, our true Passover Lamb whose blood doesn't just have the Angel of Death pass over so that the firstborn doesn't die but whose blood takes away all of our sins so that you and I, through faith in Jesus, will live forever with God in heaven. That's pretty neat.

Then, the Sunday after the Passover, we just talked about that a minute ago. You still with me? Sunday after the Passover they presented the first sheaf, the firstfruits, the first sheaf of grain. What happened on the Sunday after Maundy Thursday? Easter. Jesus rose from the dead, right? The firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Coincidence? I think not.

Now we get to Pentecost 50 days later. They're celebrating the harvest of the grain. They're celebrating. They're rejoicing in it. And on that day God keeps his promise made through Joel and through Jesus and pours out the Holy Spirit on the believers,

the Eleven, the 120, and they speak in all these different languages after the sound like a wind, what looks like tons of flame, draws a crowd together. These podunk Galilean fishermen are all of a sudden able to talk in all these languages that people from all over the known world at the time are there and they can hear the wonders of God in their own language. The harvest of souls on that first Pentecost.

God doesn't do anything coincidentally. He's trying to use the harvest and the blood of the Passover Lamb to remind us of an even greater truth. There is a bigger harvest that is going on than the sheaves of grain. It's the harvest of souls for eternity. Those souls have been bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ. God pours out his Spirit on all his people, young, old, men, women, so that they can prophecy, so they can speak the message God gives them to speak to other people. Declare the wonders of God in their own languages.

What would those wonders of God be? I don't think they were talking about splitting the atom. I think they were talking about Jesus Christ. How Jesus came, left heaven, lived perfectly because they couldn't be perfect. You can't be perfect. I can't be perfect. But God demands that of us, so Jesus provides it for us. God says sin must be punished. There has to be death. But instead of punishing us, who are sinners, he punishes the sinless Son of God who pays for all of our sins. These are the wonders of God they were talking about.

You see the results later that day. When the Spirit is poured out on people, they can start doing things you wouldn't expect. Three thousand people later that day being baptized? Picture that for a minute, would you? You see a line of 3,000 people down the aisle and you'd be here forever. You'd have to pack a lunch before I could baptize 3,000 people today, wouldn't you? But look at what they were doing.

How could they do it? Peter, on Maundy Thursday when Jesus promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Peter was living in the world of "I". "These guys, they might desert you. I'll never desert you." He was all about Peter. Then later that night he denies him three times. And now all of a sudden God is using the denier to preach the sermon that leads to the Spirit creating faith in the hearts of at least 3,000 people? Think about it.

We talked about this at Ascension, how Jesus, for 40 days after Easter kind of had an ongoing master's series Bible studies with his disciples. He showed them from Moses and the prophets and the Psalms that the Messiah had to die and rise again. He showed them all this stuff had to be. This is what God had always been talking about. He's taking them through graduate level stuff. Then as he is about to ascend into heaven, remember how we talked about what they said? "Hey Jesus, at this time are you going to establish the kingdom of Israel?" They didn't get it. They kind of failed the verbal master's exam, right?

Now, 10 days later, Peter is quoting Joel. Those four verses from Joel. "You guys think we're drunk? We aren't drunk. It's only 9 in the morning. No, this is what Joel talked

about.” Do you think he just pulled out a smartphone and kind of did a few things and started reading Joel for them? Or do you think he pulled out a pocket scroll and said “Just a second. Let me get to Joel”? No! The Spirit was poured out on him and with the Spirit’s power, he could start speaking God’s truth because God’s power was resting on him. He could start doing things he wouldn’t have been able to do when he was living in the world of “I”. Now he’s living in the world of the Spirit and the Spirit was poured out on him.

When you go home today, take out your Bible and look at [Acts 2](#). Just let it run down the page and see all those indented places where Peter, who usually couldn’t talk because his foot was always in his mouth, is quoting all these Old Testament passages. If God can work through guys like Peter, he can work through you and me.

You might say “You know what? I just don’t know that much. I don’t know the Scripture all that well.” God said “In the last days, in those days I will pour out my Spirit on all my people.” That’s what Joel said, right? That’s what Peter quoted? If you believe in Jesus Christ, God has promised to pour out the Holy Spirit on you, not just to give you the gift of faith, but to equip you to live your faith and to share your faith, to enable you to do more than you ever thought you could do.

So, you want to call God a liar? You want to say “Yeah, you might do it for that person, but you won’t do it for me”? Good luck with that. You aren’t going to win that argument. God has made this promise to you. He does it through means. He does it through the Word. He does it through the Sacrament. He does it as his Spirit strengthens us and builds us up through that beautiful message of Law and Gospel that’s there in Scripture. We see what we deserve, but instead we see what God gives us. It’s incredible this love our God has for us. The more time we spend with it, the more God will empower us. I believe that with all my heart.

Do you ever go to someone else’s house to watch a Packer game? I haven’t, but maybe you have. If you walked into the living room and you see this beautiful 100" screen, it’s curved and does all that fancy stuff, and they’re sitting in front of it cheering loudly and you notice it’s not plugged into the wall, what are you going to think about your friends? You’re going to silently and slowly back out the door because you’re going to think they’re nuts, right?

If you are a Christian, if you claim that the Spirit lives in your heart and you believe that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior and you don’t spend any time with God’s Word, you don’t have time to worship God, you don’t have time to grow in your knowledge of God’s Word, you’re the person sitting in front of an unplugged TV, aren’t you? The power of the Spirit comes to us through the Word. You don’t have to be a genius to have the Spirit give you that power.

Twenty-seven or twenty-eight years ago I was riding in a car from Lake City, Minnesota to Onalaska, Wisconsin for some workshop on Christian stuff. As we were riding, I was

riding with the chairman of our congregation, he was talking to the new wet-behind-the-ear pastor about “What are you worried about? What are you scared about?” Back then it was Viking jokes living there. But the one thing I did talk to him about is how I’m kind of worried about being able to have the Word of God that I’ve studied, being able to pull the right passage at the right time, to share God’s Word with people so it speaks to their heart. I’m kind of worried about that a little bit. Will I be able to remember all of that? Or am I going to go home and say “should of, could of, would of” and beat myself up?

We have a member of our congregation that just graduated with the highest GPA in the pastor track at Martin Luther College. Just did it. It wasn’t me. I ain’t that bright. But I’m amazed at how often God brings to my mind what I shouldn’t be able to know, because I’m just not that smart. He calls to mind portions of God’s Word and allows me to speak God’s truth to God’s people in the way that he wants me to at that time. Am I claiming that I am verbally inspired by God? No. But I do believe that when you spend time with God’s Word, the Spirit works in your heart and he’ll call to mind for you the things to speak at those times. The more you spend with God’s Word, the more he equips you and enables you and strengthens you so that you can be a part of this harvest process.

The harvest process that began on Pentecost is still going on today. Did you notice that at the end of Joel? Those four verses that were in there in the indented thing in the Service Folder? He goes from what we had as our First Lesson to the sun going dark and the moon turning blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord. He goes from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and from his point of view, he goes right to Judgment Day, right? The great and glorious day of the Lord...Judgment Day. It’s kind of like if you ever drive out West and you drive up to the mountains, you see the mountains and it looks like one big mountain range. Then you get to the top of the first peak and you notice “Hey, there’s a big valley in between to the next mountain range.” From his point of view, the Messiah coming, the Spirit being poured out and Judgment Day kind of looked like it was all one in the same.

We’re living in that valley right now between those mountain ranges. We’re in the Last Days. God continues to pour out his Spirit on us so that this harvest of souls can continue. His harvest workers are not just people that stand in front of church or stand in front of the classroom. His harvest workers are you! You are a royal priesthood, a chosen nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. The Spirit has been poured out on you so that from firstfruits of Pentecost to the full harvest of Judgment Day, the Spirit is still poured out so that you can work in God’s harvest fields.

So just talk about Jesus. Talk about his love for you and how he lived for you and how he died for you. You don’t have to know everything about everything. You just need to know Jesus. I certainly pray that you know it because it makes all the difference in the world and all the difference in eternity. Amen.