

Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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The Festival of Pentecost

Joel 2:28,29

Pastor Randy Ott

Praise God for Pouring Out the Spirit

Have you ever been so hot after working some place in the middle of the summer, so hot that when you get that drink of water, maybe a glass of water, you kind of let some of it run out the sides so it runs down your neck—or maybe you just take part of it and pour it down the back of your neck to cool you off because you are so hot. It just feels more refreshing to have some of that water poured on you than even drinking it at times. I remember in football camps when it would be the middle of August and it would be hot. Nothing to me felt better than to get the hose after practice and not drink from it, but just let it run down my back.

Refreshment that comes from things being poured out is one of the themes really of Pentecost. It is the fulfillment of what Joel had said. That is what Peter told the people on that first Pentecost when they said, “Look at what’s going on. What in the world are these guys doing? How are they talking in these languages?” Peter said, “The Spirit has been poured out on them.” It’s just what Joel had said would happen.

So as we gather together this morning, we gather together to praise God for pouring out the Spirit. We praise God not just for pouring out the Spirit on those disciples of Christ on the first Pentecost, but we praise God for pouring out the Spirit on us yet today. He pours out the Spirit on us yet today for the same reason he did almost 2,000 years ago—so we can see like the prophets of old saw and so that we can speak like the prophets of old spoke. That is what our God reminds us of today.

“In that day” Joel had said. In the versus immediately preceding our text, it is referring to the coming of the Messiah as a rain shower that refreshes the land that comes and gives the land exactly what it is looking for. So in that day and afterward, it is after the Messiah comes and does the work that the Father had laid out for him to do. After that, God promises he would pour out his Spirit on his people. That to us might not sound like a whole lot, but to the people of Joel’s day, this would have been an amazing thought, a thrilling thought, an incredible thought—that he is going to pour it out on all people. What they were used to is that God’s prophet was the one that the Spirit was poured out on. So if someone began to speak as a prophet and they weren’t a prophet, it would utterly shock and amaze the people as it happened one time with King Saul. They said, “Is Saul among the prophets?” that he was prophesying that the Spirit was speaking through him.

In that day, they didn't go to the Scriptures like you and I can—in their back pockets and look up different things—they had to wait until God spoke to them through the prophets. God would tell them what God wanted them to know.

I think sometimes that we today have kind of a warped notion of what a prophet was or what prophecy is. Most of the time when I ask that question, I get some kind of answer that points me to a future event that a prophet prophesies or tells about the future. Yes, sometimes they did. All the prophets that pointed ahead to the coming Messiah were talking about a future event. But so very often the prophets spoke a word that God wanted the people to hear and listen to that applied to their life right then and there where they were. When Isaiah came and Micah came and Joel came and some of these other prophets came and said, "Repent and turn away from your false gods and turn back to the Lord," he wasn't asking them to do it a couple hundred years from now. It was a message that was for right then and right there.

So to prophesy or to speak as a prophet—the prophets spoke the message that God wanted them to speak to the people. Sometimes the Lord would give them a vision that they would see and then they would speak that vision as with Daniel. When you read through the book of Daniel, there are a lot of visions in there. Sometimes they would dream dreams and God would speak to them through those dreams. The prophet Samuel had that voice come to him as he was sleeping. They would see visions, they would dream dreams, God would speak to them in various ways, and then they would share that message with others. But it only came through the prophets.

But now God is saying, "After the Messiah comes, I am going to pour out my Spirit on everyone so that they all will prophesy. So that they all see these visions and dream these dreams." He is talking about you as a Christian today.

You might be thinking that you have never seen visions or dreamt dreams like the prophets of old, but you have to remember what the purpose was of those visions or dreams. It was to communicate a part of God's message to his people. For most of them, they only communicated a small portion of what God wanted his people to know.

In Genesis we are told that someone would come to destroy the serpent's head and destroy the devil's work. We hear later through Isaiah that it is going to be someone that is born of a virgin. We hear through Micah that it is going to be someone born in Bethlehem. We hear through the psalmist that the Holy One would not see decay—that even though he would die, he would rise again. We hear through Isaiah that he would be beaten, pierced, be silent like a sheep before his shearer—all these different prophets got all different parts of the whole picture. But you and I have the Spirit poured out on us—not so we just get one special little detail—you and I have what those prophets longed for. We have the whole entire big picture. We have seen from the creation of the world to the completion of God's plan of salvation. We have seen God talk to us about what is going to go on until the end of time when he comes again. We have what Scripture tells us the prophets longed to see. They didn't know the fulfillment of what they spoke when they spoke about the coming Messiah. You and I do. We have seen the big picture. We don't need a special revelation to come in a vision to tell us something more, because God has said he has already told us everything he wants

us to know. But we have seen it all. We have seen the fulfillment. So now the Spirit is poured out on us so that we can take all of these things—all of these different dreams and visions—and put them together and see the big comforting picture. Our God has revealed to us all these things, so we see what the prophets longed to see.

That should humble us. That should almost make us weak in the knees. God has entrusted this to us? He gave us more than he gave Isaiah? He gave us more than he gave Daniel? Did you ever stop to think about that? That is what he is telling us. We have the whole picture. We have what they longed for.

So what do we long for when we can see like the prophets saw? Do we long to look deeper into the mysteries of God's Word and see how he did these incredible things? Or do we long for that rerun of Friends or Simpsons or something else? Or do we long to sit by a lake and watch the water roll? Or do we long to be out hunting or fishing? God has enabled us to see what the prophets longed to see and yet so often, we today long for something else. We turn our attention into other directions. We say studying God's Word deeper and more fully is for kids. That is not adult work. We take what the prophets longed to know and push it aside as though it is a fly on our back that we have to get rid of. That is sad. That is wrong. But that also is a sin that Jesus Christ died for.

The times that you and I despise the sight that God has given us—the vision he has given us of being able to see Scripture and being able to search it and know it—the sins that we commit in despising his Word, Jesus Christ has taken away by his life and his death in our place, just like he has taken away every other one of the sins that you and I ever have or ever will commit. That is what the whole vision and the whole picture focuses upon. It focuses on Jesus Christ and who he is and what he has done. That is what makes it such a glorious picture. That is what makes it such a glorious vision, a wonderful dream, because it focuses upon the reality of how God has taken away our sins in Christ. When we see that and we apply it to our life specifically, it moves us to want to dig in deeper—to know God more fully, to serve him more faithfully, to know him face to face as Moses did, as we come into his presence whenever we study the Word or receive his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Then we are seeing the full picture.

God poured out his Spirit on us so that we can do that. But he also poured it out on us not only so that we can know the whole picture for ourselves but as Joel said, "*Your sons and daughters will prophesy...*" so that we can speak as the prophets spoke. So that we share this gospel message with those who need it—which would be one another, fellow believers, and those who do not yet believe so that God might bring them to faith. And God has not entrusted that just to a chosen few prophets today, not just to pastors and teachers, but to every last person who claims the name Christian. God has poured out his Spirit into every one of our hearts so that we can be his witnesses to Jerusalem, to Judea, and to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. As you look back over your life and you think of those who have shared God's Word with you, I would guess it would fit the pattern of what Joel talked about—young and old, men and women, fellow believers who have shared God's Word with you.

As I look back over my life, the most influential person on me in becoming a pastor, to devote my life to sharing this message, wasn't my pastor. We were all scared to death of my pastor. I told you that before. It was my mom and my dad. Then after my mom and my dad, it was Mrs. Helen Scoles, my grade school teacher. She taught me God's Word, but she taught it to me in a way that she lived it. It wasn't just everything she said. It was how she said it. When I would come up and put up my feeble arguments on why that one that was wrong actually should have been right, she would patiently listen to me, laugh at me and then say, "Oh Randy" and then I would go back to my seat with a smile on my face even though I didn't get my way. She lived her faith in Christ for me.

That's what you and I get to do. We get to live our faith in Christ. We get to prophesy, speak God's Word to God's people, both in what we say about who Jesus is and what he has done, and how we say it. We get to touch the lives of others so that God may work his faith in their hearts. He does the work. We don't do it. It's not up to us, but we are his voice. We are his hands. We are the arms of God that extend his love. He does all the work. We don't have to worry about bringing anyone else to faith because we can't. But we can be the voice that God works through. You can be the living example of Christ-like love in the hearts of others so that YOU speak God's Word to God's people. That's the privilege that God gives to us. He gives it to us on this Pentecost day. He gives it to us every day of our lives.

We might stop and think it would have been nice to be able to speak in different languages and have tongues of fire like all these candles we have in our windows. It might have been nice to have the presence of God so clearly defined with the sound of the rushing wind in those flames. My friends, the presence of God is just as clearly defined today—in Word and Sacrament. Today we can come forward and receive the Sacrament, and God himself is present. He strengthens us and he nurtures our faith. But like those apostles on that first Pentecost, we can speak and bring to others the very presence of God as we speak his words and as we share his gospel. God himself is present.

So don't envy what the apostles did on that first Pentecost, but go and live what the apostles did on that first Pentecost and share God's word with others.