

Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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June 4, 2006
The Festival of Pentecost
Acts 2:1-21
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Ezekiel 37:1-14
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 51b
Second Lesson: Acts 2:1-21
Gospel: John 14:25-27

God Pours Out His Spirit

So what do you have cooking at home for Pentecost dinner? Do you have a Pentecost poultry? Do you have a Pentecost pot pie? What is the big fancy dinner you all have ready? You probably haven't heard that question this morning, have you? You haven't heard, "Hey, who came home for Pentecost to celebrate Pentecost with you?" Or, "Where are you going to celebrate Pentecost?" I bet you nobody asked you that in the basement or in the parking lot as you walked in.

Well, Pentecost is one of the three major festivals of the church year—Christmas and Easter are the other two. On Christmas, don't you get those questions all the time?—"Who came home for Christmas? Where are you going for Christmas? What are you having for Christmas? Who is cooking Christmas dinner?" The same thing with Easter, but you probably didn't get it today. Why not? Is it because Pentecost isn't that important? I don't think so. You are all here. You are telling me it is important because you are here, right? Or did you find out it was Pentecost when you walked in and there were these red things all over and these symbols of fire on our walls. Then did you go, "Oh. It's Pentecost"?

I think maybe the reason is what we talked about Thursday afternoon at Ladies Aid. During Christmas and Easter, in a secular society, different things happen, right?—Christmas break, Easter break for schools and the like. People do this whether or not they are celebrating a Christian holiday. They go and spend time with family at those times of the year. But on this festival of the church year, secular society is not having a Pentecost sale, is it? So maybe that is why we aren't as excited about it at times, which begs the question that we looked at last Tuesday in Bible study—can you tell the difference between Christians and non-Christians? Maybe it speaks to us that too often we follow the secular lead instead of being the salt of the earth that God has called us to.

Why is Pentecost special for you and me? Why is it the third major festival of the church year? Why is it something that we mark Sundays after in the church year?—because it is an incredible blessing for you and me that you and I really experience and live day after day whether we are recognizing it or not. As Christians, we live in Pentecost each and every day of our lives. As New Testament Christians, it is a truth that is there and that is certain because the reason we celebrate Pentecost is because God poured out his Spirit. We see that in the text, but what does that have to do with us? God poured out his Spirit, not just on a select few but on all of his people, all of the believers that were gathered together there. And as Peter quotes Joel he shows that this is fulfillment of how things are going to be different after the Messiah comes because God continues to pour out his Spirit on you and me each and every day of our lives. What does that mean for us? One of the things that we see as we look into

God's Word in the Book of Acts this morning is that it means that God pours out his Spirit on us so that God's people will speak boldly and act boldly and live boldly with the knowledge that we are forgiven. Heaven is ours. Our sins have been washed away and, we know this for a certainty because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

God poured out his Spirit on that first Pentecost. The first Pentecost of the New Testament era, I suppose you would say, at the New Testament church because as our text says, *When the day of Pentecost came* (Acts 2:1), it is talking about the Feast of Weeks, which was also called "Pentecost" or the "Ingathering." You can read about it in Deuteronomy and Leviticus in your Bibles. It is one of the three festivals that God had commanded that every male Jew go to Jerusalem to celebrate, to worship, to offer sacrifices, certain sacrifices that they were to offer. Pentecost was to take place seven weeks—so $7 \times 7 = 49$ —and then one day after the Passover—so 50—just like we celebrate our Pentecost—50 days after Christ's resurrection from the dead.

One of the things that is interesting is that God doesn't act haphazardly. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and said, "Take and drink, this is my blood,"—this blessing that we will enjoy today in worship—it was as they celebrated the Passover. They had these questions they would ask with these cups that they were drinking to remind them of their time in Egypt, but also to remind them that the blood of a spotless lamb without defect was put over their doorpost so that the Angel of Death would pass over them. So the connection—Jesus gives us his blood so that the Angel of Eternal Death passes over us because his blood washes away our sin. God doesn't just act haphazardly.

So when he has this New Testament festival of Pentecost that comes on the day that they celebrated the completion of the harvest, God wasn't acting haphazardly. God poured out his Spirit on all these people so that they could speak in all these different languages so that people could hear who Jesus was and what Jesus had done to take away their sins in their own language so that the harvest of souls could be gathered in. But how to get all those souls there so that they would hear this message? The Holy Spirit, before he was poured out on the people, comes in a visible, tangible way, so to speak, so that it would attract attention. The signs of the Holy Spirit, some of them that we marked this morning with all the red geraniums, the tongues of fire that came down over the people's heads, the symbol of fire that we have on the side of our wall with the ribbons, that was to attract attention. The sound like a rushing wind—do you notice how it said a sound like a rushing wind, not exactly a rushing wind itself because if you hear a rushing wind and you walk outside and the wind is blowing you say, "It's a rushing wind." But a sound like a rushing wind and you go outside and there is no wind, "What is going on? And what are those people with those things over their heads over there?" You get closer and you start hearing, "That guy is speaking Cretan! I am from Crete. I can understand what he is saying!" And all the people around you are saying the same thing. All these other people that have come to Jerusalem for this festival, as God had commanded them to, and all of a sudden you are hearing about someone named Jesus who they are saying is the Son of God, who is the Messiah, who fulfills everything that was said. "Can it be true? What is going on?"

But of course, sinful nature has to jump up and interrupt things, doesn't it? Because of sinful nature, some of the people that heard all of this didn't say, "God must be doing something special." Fire—God has never acted through fire before, has he? He led the children of Israel through the night by the pillar of fire. Moses heard from a burning bush. It should have been a "connect the dots" kind of picture for people going on there

at that time, but some of this, because of their sinful nature, connected the dot not to God but to a bottle of wine. They said, "They are all drunk. That is why they are babbling. That is not another language. I don't understand what they are saying. These guys are all drunk." The sinful nature always assumes the worst, doesn't it? Just like we do with each other from time to time, assume the worst instead of taking each other's words and actions in the kindest possible way.

So then Peter stands up and the Spirit is poured out on him. The Eleven stand up with him and he says, "No. These guys aren't drunk. Connect the dots people! This is what God had said already through the prophet Joel." God had promised through the prophet Joel that "*In the last days...*" (Acts 2:17)—notice how from Joel's perspective the time of the Messiah to the end of time was in one picture because he ends up at the end of our reading talking about the "*great and glorious day of the Lord*" (Acts 2:20)—Judgment Day. From his point of view, the Messiah coming and then the end was so close together. We are living in between that time and to us it seems like a long way apart. It is all a matter of perspective, right? But Joel talks about what is going to happen after the Messiah comes and at that time God is going to pour out his Holy Spirit—not just on the prophets who went then and spoke God's message to God's people at the various times as God gave it to them—but God is going to pour out his Spirit on all people. Think about what a difference that is. God pouring his Spirit out on all of us as opposed to just waiting for every now and then a prophet to come and say, "This is the message God has for you." John the Baptist down along the River Jordan saying, "You sinners repent! The kingdom of God is near!" You don't have to wait for a messenger like that now. But because God has poured out his Holy Spirit at that first Pentecost, and he continues to do it through the New Testament era, that includes you and me. God is pouring out his Spirit on you and me.

How does he do it? Do you have to roll your eyes back up in your head and wait until you start speaking different languages and then God has poured out his Spirit on you? No. Those were signs that God gave to attract attention. Most often you would see them when the Gospel first came to a new place and after the Gospel was established, he used things that—as Paul said, "*I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue*" (1 Corinthians 14:19) that no one can understand.

God pours his Spirit out on you and me through his means of grace. If you came to faith as a child through the gift of baptism, God poured out the Holy Spirit on you then. If you came to faith later as an adult, because the Word was spoken to you and the Word worked in your heart, that was the Holy Spirit being poured out on you through that Word. And after you have come to faith, God continues to pour his Spirit out on you day after day after day. Whenever you pick up the Bible, God is pouring his Spirit into your heart. You don't have to wait for some guy dressed in a robe saying, "The end is near" to come and tell you, "Here is what God has to say for you." Each and every time you want to know what God wants you to think and what God wants you to know and the comfort God wants you to have, then pick up the Bible and read it and the Spirit will burn in your hearts just as certainly as he did in the hearts of the Emmaus disciples. When you come to the Lord's Supper—the very body and blood of our Savior that was given and poured out for you—the Spirit works through that to strengthen your faith to assure you of God's love that he has taken away your sins.

God pours out his Spirit on us in this way, but again the sinful nature sometimes leads us away, right? We are too busy or don't have time for the Word in our daily lives. We all have that temptation at times and we all give in to it at times, but the Spirit that pours into our hearts pours into us a Savior that was perfect in our place. He has taken away our sins by being perfect and by taking them to the cross. So instead of letting Satan accuse us and then beating ourselves up over the fact that we don't do what God has called us to do, we can rejoice in the truth that, "This is my body. This is my blood for the forgiveness of your sins" and that we stand before God perfect now and with the desire to have his Spirit in our hearts more and more so that we grow and so that we have that peace that passes all understanding.

As God pours his Spirit out on us, it has an effect on us. It is an effect that the world is looking for. It is an effect that Dr. Phil is trying to give to people in his own unique way. Freedom from guilt, freedom from worry, freedom from anxiety—not because we have decided to pull ourselves up by our boot straps, but because we have a living Lord who lived in our place, died in our place and rose again. Because we have a Savior God who promised and then sent the Holy Spirit and continues to send the Holy Spirit into all of our hearts so that we now can speak that Word of God boldly. That is one of the effects of the Holy Spirit being poured out into our hearts.

What would it have been?—52-53 days earlier—a cold night, a dark night, the middle of the night—a whole bunch of people gathered in a courtyard around a fire to keep warm and all of a sudden someone looks at Peter and says, "You look like one of those Galileans that was out there with Jesus." Do you remember what Peter did? "Not me! It wasn't me!" "Sure it was you" another one says. And what does Peter do? "You know what. It wasn't me! And I am not lying to you and if I am lying, may I rot in hell for all of eternity." He begins calling down curses on himself that he doesn't know this Jesus that they speak of. Fifty-two days, fifty-three days later—*"Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel"* (Acts 2:14-16). Do you notice a change? Do you notice something that takes place, something that has happened to change it? Remember, he was one of the Eleven that were there when Jesus ascended; maybe the other hundred were also there who were asking Jesus, *"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:6) on Ascension (10 days ago that we celebrated it). They still didn't get what the kingdom of God was at that point in time. So now, 10 days later, is there a big difference? "This is what Joel had said." The guys who didn't understand the Word of God all that well but knew that Jesus was their Savior had the Spirit poured into their hearts and it sure began to click. "This is Joel. Here is what he was talking about. Do you people see this? He said he was going to pour his Spirit out on all of us and look! It is happening. That is why they are speaking in languages they don't know, because the Holy Spirit is being poured out on this group so that we may share with you that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." He uses that last phrase from the Book of Joel to bridge into who Jesus was and what Jesus had done. And Joel wasn't his last Bible reference for them.

Read the rest of his sermon in Acts 2. He quotes from Isaiah. He quotes from the Book of Psalms. He takes Scripture and weaves it together incredibly well for a guy that so often had a hard time speaking because his foot was in his mouth. But now that the Spirit is on him, he is not running away. He is not hiding in a locked room. None of the others are. Now that the Spirit has been poured out on them, they speak the Word of

God clearly. They point to Jesus. They use all the Old Testament, not to point to Laws, not to point to self, but to point to Jesus.

How has the Word of God changed you? The more time you spend in the Word, do you find yourself now thinking, "I can speak it"? Do you find yourself maybe starting out with, "You know, I should have said..." whereas before you were in the Word of God more regularly you didn't even think about those things? Now you talk with someone and you get home and think, "I should have said this. This would have fit from God's Word."

The next step is, as you spend more time in the Word, you start saying, "Here is what God means to me. Here is what he has done for me when I have been in a situation like that." You begin to do what God has called each of us to do, not just the Pastors or the Called Workers, but each of us has been called to teach and admonish one another in love and to let the Word dwell in us richly so that we can speak to one another and build one another up. The more the Word of God is in you, the more you will be able to speak it boldly. It's not that you should, but the more that you are in the Word of God, the more you will **want** to because Christian life is not "have to's." It is something that flows out of this love that God has for us because he has taken away our sin. Now we **want** to speak his truth in love.

We want to do it lovingly. We want to do it patiently. That is why we need God's ongoing strength through Word and Sacrament, because we are going to fail. We are not always going to speak it lovingly. We are not always going to be patient when we share the Word with someone. We are going to expect and want to see results over night. We are going to want to see the fruits of repentance grow faster than hair on a Chia Pet. That is not always how it works, so God calls us to be loving and patient and continue to speak the Word and his truth in love. The way that happens, that we do it boldly, is with the Spirit living in us.

This is why Pentecost is so special to us. It has changed our relationship with God. We don't have to wait for someone else to come and tell us what God thinks or says. We can pick up the Word. We can use the Sacraments and he speaks it to us directly. Then we don't have to wait for someone else to help us share that with someone else. **He has called us** to be his representatives to the world. That is why it is such a joy to celebrate the truth that God poured out his Spirit on the apostles and on us.