



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

May 27, 2007

The Festival of Pentecost

John 15:26, 27

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Genesis 11:1-9

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 51b

Second Lesson: Acts 2:1-21

Gospel: John 15:26, 27

Come, Holy Spirit, Come!

Did you get your Pentecost shopping done early this year or were you rushing out at the last minute yesterday to pick up the rest of your Pentecost gifts? Are you all here this morning in your new Pentecost dresses and suits? Now you think I hit my head on the steps coming up here, don't you?

We don't exactly exchange gifts on Pentecost, do we? We don't hide baskets full of chocolate on Pentecost. I am wagering that no one said this past week to you or you said to anyone, "So what are you doing for Pentecost this year? Whose house are you going to for Pentecost dinner?" Because we don't do those things, sometimes the third major festival of the church year becomes a surprise when we walk into church and say, "Hey, what is all that red stuff up on the altar? Why does the bulletin look different? How come we have all this other stuff we have to sing today?"

A man once said to my father when he was visiting him, "You Lutherans, you neglect the Holy Spirit." I don't believe him, but sometimes the Festival of Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit kind of gets pushed off to the side because it comes at a place and a time where we don't focus on the festival secularly in our daily lives, so we might forget about it in our spiritual life.

But as we gather together here this morning as the body of Christ, as his believers who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb, we do so because the Holy Spirit has been living and active in our life and because we are desperate to cry out to him, "Come Holy Spirit; come!" Even if at times we may forget and even if at times we may neglect to focus on how important his work is, we know that it is vital for our lives as Christians. We are reminded of that truth by Jesus in the words that he spoke on Maundy Thursday to his disciples when he knew they were about to be troubled like no other "troubled" that they could experience on this earth. They would see Jesus betrayed by one of their own. They would see him beaten. They would see him crucified. They would see him buried. To prepare them for those unimaginable things on Maundy Thursday, he pointed them to the Holy Spirit. He said to them, *When the Counselor comes...the Spirit of truth...he will testify about me.* (John 15:26). Then he reminded them, "That means also you are going to testify about me."

Those truths that he spoke to those apostles on Maundy Thursday evening are just as true for us as we gather together today on Pentecost. We need the Holy Spirit to come to us and to testify to us about the truth so that he can testify through us to the world.

That first Maundy Thursday must have been something that the disciples talked about over and over again because Jesus taught them so much that night that it probably couldn't have all sunk in. In the time that they were waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we are told in the Book of Acts that they devoted themselves to praying continually and meeting together and studying continually the Word of God. As we have been seeing in our Bible Studies on Sunday mornings and Thursday evenings the last few weeks, all that study and all that time in the Word paid off because they started handling the Word of God unlike they had ever handled it before. It bore fruit in their lives because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth came to them and testified to them about Jesus.

It's amazing! We looked at it again this morning in Bible Study. These guys start quoting from the Book of Psalms and showing how these things had to happen to Jesus. They do it for one another. They do it for those they speak to. These are the same guys that were locked up because they were so afraid of Caiaphas and Annas and as we heard this morning, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and after they had spent all that time in the Word, the Spirit of Truth changed them. It made them bold. It gave them courage. It gave them authority. That authority comes from exactly what these verses of Jesus talk about. He is the Spirit of Truth—the Spirit that gives us THE truth—not just a truth among many truths, but THE truth. Just like Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the light,” it doesn't mean he is a truth-bringer. It means he is truth. He doesn't just relate the truth. He is the truth that saves us from eternal damnation. Without Jesus Christ and his life and death for us, we are lost and condemned creatures Luther said. Without the Holy Spirit to lead us to believe what Jesus did—what he did for us personally—what he did for the world, he did for us personally—we would remain lost and condemned in our own sins. The Spirit takes the truth that is Jesus and brings that truth to our hearts and leads us to believe that our sins are taken away.

We need that testimony day after day after day, because as sinners, we have our times of doubt. We hear parts of his Word and we doubt, “Does he really mean that? Is what he says here really true? Is the body and the blood really present in, with and under the bread and the wine? All I see is bread and wine?” The devil would lead us to doubt this truth so that we wouldn't have the comforting assurance of the Sacrament that our God has for us. “Sins forgiven?—but I've done such terrible things. Does he really mean it?” The Spirit of Truth testifies that God means it.

We need to be in that truth over and over and over again because in and of ourselves, we are going to wander in every which direction. If you have ever sat and watched a dog chase its tail and thought, “That's really a silly animal”—think about yourself and the things we chase after as truth or where we are going to find pleasure or where we are going to find purpose or where we are going to find meaning or where we are going to find comfort. Think of the things we chase after. We aren't a whole lot different at times than a dog chasing its tail.

That is why we need the Spirit to take us by the hand through Word and Sacrament and say, “Here is what is meaningful. Here is what is enduring. Here is what is eternal. It's God's love for you in Christ. Here is where you find your purpose. Here is where you

will find your comfort. You won't find it in the bottom of a bottle. You won't find it in some kind of pills you pop in your mouth. You will find your comfort in God. It doesn't mean that everything will go smoothly and without problems, but it means the Holy Spirit will be at our side to lead us to Christ and to the Father so that we will find the comfort he has for us.

Then he brings us to his altar and he says to us, "Here is your Savior's very body and blood. If you think your sins can't be forgiven, here it is. It was given for you. It was poured out for you. It forgives your sins. You are loved eternally." That is God's message to you. And he brings it to you through the work of the Holy Spirit.

You might think, "Boy, it would have been neat to have the Holy Spirit come into you so you could speak different tongues." Just ask your children—they can't understand you half the time anyhow. They think you are speaking in tongues. But, the Spirit does come to you. When you are in his Word, he is coming to you just as certainly as he came to those first apostles. If you want to be able to learn to speak with the authority that Peter did when he stood up and said, "This Jesus whom you crucified, God has made both Lord and Savior," you learn to do it as the Spirit testifies. He testifies to you and he testifies through you, because the more time you spend in the Word, the more the Spirit's power is in you and it grows in you so that you begin to think scripturally. You don't think according to your sinful nature as much anymore. You think according to the Spirit. You look at situations differently.

Just like we looked at in Bible study this morning, this amazing thing—the disciples thrown into prison overnight because they had healed a guy and then they were talking about the resurrection. They come before the same guys that had tried Jesus and sentenced him to death through Pilate. They came before the same guys—Caiaphas and Annas. They said, "Judge for yourself, who should we follow—the commands of men or the commands of God?" Where did that kind of strength come from? Where did that kind of gumption come from? Remember Peter, the guy that said this, is the same guy who said, "I'd rather rot in hell than admit that I know Jesus" on Maundy Thursday when he denied him. Now he looks the guys in the eyes that killed Jesus and said, "You tell me, what should I do—obey you or obey God?" Where does that kind of courage come from? It doesn't come from Peter. It doesn't come from you. It doesn't come from me. It comes from the Holy Spirit. They had spent that time in the Word and they stand up and speak boldly. Then when they go home and prayed with fellow believers, they didn't say, "Lord, thank you for getting us out of that mess." Their vision was completely consumed with who God was. They praised God for his creation and asked God to continue to bless them as they talked about Jesus. Their vision was filled with God.

As their vision is filled with God because of that time in Word and Sacraments, as they devoted themselves daily to the apostles teaching and the breaking of bread, they were able to speak in the church group from 3,000 to 5,000. And it kept growing, even as they were persecuted and as they spread out over the countryside. They continued to speak. The Spirit testified through them until eventually the Spirit of God saw to it that because of their testimony, a body of believers in Morrison, Wisconsin built a church and established a congregation. So if they could continue to testify that the Spirit could

testify through them to one generation after the next, Pentecost is an ongoing event as each of us testifies. The Spirit testifies through us as we speak with our children and with our neighbors and with one another. The same praise that they sung, the same Spirit that lived in them lives in us and speaks through us so that we have this everlasting flame—the same one that burned on the day of Pentecost burns in us today.