



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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June 12, 2011
The Festival of Pentecost
Sermon Text: [John 16:5-11](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Joel 2:28, 29](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 51b](#)
Second Lesson: [Acts 2:1-21](#)
Gospel Lesson: [John 16:5-11](#)

The life of the Church is empowered by the Spirit of God

So which do you like first, the good news or the bad news? If you are sitting in the doctor's office and he says, "I have good news and bad news, which do you want to hear?" Probably just the good news, right? I suppose if you look at what I just read to you from what Jesus said, Jesus starts out with the bad news, right? He has bad news...he's going away. He's got good news...the Holy Spirit is coming. He starts them out with the bad news, the news that filled them with grief, the news that made their heads spin that Maundy Thursday so they didn't know what in the world was going on, the news that they wouldn't really understand until the Holy Spirit came.

It's kind of interesting to see the contrast in this reading between what we celebrated last Thursday, the Festival of Ascension, and what we celebrate this week, the Festival of Pentecost. At the Festival of Ascension, we see Jesus in his Divinity ascend into heaven. But think of how scared those guys had to be. That just had to be frightening, let alone seeing some guy float up into the sky. I would think that would shake you up enough. But the guy they had leaned upon, the guy they had depended upon, the guy they had invested the last three years or more of their lives on...they had to think to themselves, "There's so much more you could teach us Jesus. There's so much more we have to learn. We're really not all that bright." They kind of proved it, didn't they? When he was about to ascend, what did they ask Jesus? "Jesus, at this time are you going to establish the kingdom of God?" They still didn't get that the kingdom of God wasn't going to be the return to David's glory. They just didn't get that yet. There was an awful lot they didn't get.

There was a lot of this that Jesus had already told them about. Already on Maundy Thursday he had told them that he was soon going to die very shortly after this. He told them that he was the way to the Father, and they didn't get that. He told them in his Father's house, there are many mansions, and he was going to prepare a place for them. They weren't sure what all that meant. They knew he was telling them when he spoke these words that he was going to die and he was going to be gone; he was going to rise again, but then he'd be gone. They just didn't get it. They just had to be filled with so much grief that they were paralyzed. They probably couldn't even think rationally because they were so shook up. Have you ever had that experience? You're so torn apart that you can't even hardly think. You have to have someone help you.

That's kind of what it sounds like when Jesus is talking to them in the beginning with the bad news, right? "I'm going to him who sent me, yet none of you ask me 'where are

you going.” Why don’t they ask him? He says, “Because I’ve said these things, you’re so filled with grief that you can’t get out the questions you should be asking.” They just don’t get it. And they aren’t going to get it on their own. They aren’t going to get it right then and right there. That’s why he says to them “That’s bad, and I know it’s going to hurt you and you’re going to be troubled for a time, but really, when I get down to the bottom of it, this is good. It’s good for you that I go away. If I go away, then I’ll send the Spirit to you. I’ll send the Counselor, the Comforter, the Paraclete, the One who will stand by your side and enable you to do what you can’t do on your own.” That sounds pretty cool!

When I think of all the things I can’t do on my own, all the things I worry about facing in my daily life on my own, to know I don’t have to because God has sent the Holy Spirit into my heart and he sends to Holy Spirit to me and leads me to believe that Jesus lived and died in my place and took away my sins and heaven is open to me and anything that happens to me in this world is only temporary...wow! God promises me something like that? That’s the good news, right?

Think about that good news that the Spirit came to these guys. Think about how it changed them. These are the guys who later that night, after he spoke these words, all ran away. They ran away like someone was giving away ice cream. They just got out of there when the mob came. They didn’t want to face arrests themselves. One of these guys, Peter, is the one who said “All those guys, they might deny you or abandon you. I never will.” He’s the guy that denied him three times later that night.

Yet, when you see them on Pentecost, after the Counselor comes to them, this outpouring of the Spirit, and if you read through Acts 2 this week, and even in the section we read in our Second Lesson, all those indented lines, those are all quotations from the Old Testament. Look at how Peter has been changed. Here’s the guy that usually talked with a few toes in his mouth because he was always sticking his foot in his mouth, and now here he is using the Word of God, not like some Galilean fisherman, but like some exquisitely trained theologian. He’s weaving Old Testament passages in and out and he shows the people that this Jesus that they killed, he was the Promised Savior and all of their sins were put on him and he took away the sins of the world. So when the people later that day are cut to the heart and said “What should we do?” You have to believe he had a big smile on his face and said “Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you’ll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” They would get some of what had just changed him from Peter the loudmouth into Peter the incredible evangelist.

Look at how it changed the rest of these guys. Some of these guys had nicknames of blowhard, right? Sons of thunder, angry blowhards...how would you like that for a nickname? Those were their nicknames. God changed them with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Previous tax collectors...God changed these guys. He transformed their lives so that when Jesus ascended 10 days earlier and Jesus said to them, “You’re going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem.” They probably thought that was alright. “Judea”...alright. “Samaria”...wait a minute. “The ends of the earth”...you have to be

kidding! That assignment that was given to them and they carried it out. Tradition tells us some of these guys went to India, to China, they went into the continent of Africa, the continent of Europe. They spread out and they went to the ends of the earth. These guys, who weren't that bright to begin with, who weren't that much different than you and me, but when the Counselor came, the Holy Spirit, he changed them. He gave them a knowledge and understanding. Yes they believed Jesus was the Messiah, but the Holy Spirit gave them the understanding of what that truly meant. It wasn't "We are going to have Solomon's glory again in Jerusalem." It was "Your sins are forgiven. Heaven is open to you. God will now be with you as you go and serve him all the days of your life. And he'll help you through whatever garbage you encounter as you live in a sinful world." They encountered it. They triumphed over it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You and I encounter it. Some days maybe we triumph. Some days maybe we don't. We face hardships. We face challenges. We face difficulties. When we try to face them on our own, often we end up with just bigger problems. But when we face them with the Holy Spirit living in our hearts, strengthening us, pointing us back to our Savior, pointing us to the fact that our God loved us enough to die for us and take our sins away, pointing us to the fact that he has promised never to abandon or leave us, pointing us to these truths, then we've triumphed over them as well. Then we live with our eyes on our God and not on our shortcomings. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us that power and that strength. The question becomes, are we going to make use of that power? Or are we going to try to face everything on our own?

Have you seen those commercials for that new 70-inch Sharp Aquos television or something like that? Evidently if you buy it you get this giant head because that's what it shows in every single one of the commercials, the head on that TV. If you have one of those at home, God bless you. But if you go home and you stare at that TV this afternoon and try to watch NASCAR or golf or whatever you want to watch and you stare at it and stare at it and stare at it and forget to plug the thing in, you aren't seeing anything, right? I don't care how big it is.

It's the same way in your spiritual life, isn't it? If you don't plug into the Holy Spirit's power through Word, through going back to your baptism, which we were blessed to have this morning, through the body and blood of Christ given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins, if you don't plug into that power, you aren't going to have the ability to face these difficulties that come.

And when you do plug in, God has promised he will transform you, and he does. He then uses us, just like he used those guys to convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. You and I can't do that on our own. We say we don't talk so good. We aren't that bright. We don't remember everything all that well. It doesn't matter. When we have the Holy Spirit working in us and through us, we simply use his power and speak the Word and he does the work. He does the convincing, or convicting. Convince is probably a better word. He is the one who convinces. I can't convince you. I can't even keep some of you awake. How am I going to convince you?

The Spirit does that work, not me. And when you go out of here, or when you talk to one another, or when you go talk to someone else, the Spirit does the work of convincing that person, not you. He convinces the world in regard to sin. What does he say? "Because men don't believe in me." He is the One that shows people that their sins have separated them from God and that the only answer to that sin is faith that Jesus lived and died to take away those sins. That's not your job. Your job is to proclaim it. He does the convincing.

He convinces people of guilt in regard to righteousness because Jesus is going to the Father. He is the one that convinces the person that because Jesus lived, died, rose and then returned to the Father, our salvation has been absolutely secured. The perfection (that's what righteousness means) that God demands of you and me (be holy, be perfect...that's what he says to us), we can't do it. But because Jesus lived, died, rose again and went back to heaven, it's been secured for us. God credits Jesus' perfection to us. He'll convince the world in regard to righteousness, that perfection, that righteousness.

"Because I'm going to the Father where you can see me no longer in regard to judgment"...this is the one that is something to return to over and over again. When Satan is telling you "You did this" or "You did that, God can't love you anymore," let the Holy Spirit convince you that the prince of this world stands condemned. Jesus life and death destroyed the work of the devil. Your sins have been forgiven. Just tell him to "Take a walk. Take a hike. Get away. I'm covered in Jesus' righteousness. I'm holy in Jesus' eyes. My God loves me." That's what the Holy Spirit convinces you of, and then you proclaim it, and he'll convince someone else of it through you.

The Holy Spirit transforms us. I believe it with all my heart. He transforms us so much that God tells us "Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have." God expects that our transformation, as it shows up more and more in our lives, will leave people to ask us why. Then we can give that answer.

I have to admit that quite often that transformation doesn't show up the way I want it to in my life. I'm still a sinful fool at times and do things that hurt others and hurt my God. But with God's help, he forgives me and he'll transform me so that I do better in the future, that I live for him with joy, not because I have to but because I want to, and he'll do the same for you. The more he transforms us, the more people will ask us, the more we will share the Gospel, the more the Spirit will work to build others up or bring others to faith, the more the kingdom will grow. That's why it's good that Jesus went home.