

Pentecost 2019

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Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-13

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

Will you pray with me? Our Father, will you send your Holy Spirit in a fresh new way to empower us and teach us and guide us to glean from this passage those things that have been written about you. We ask that even as we do that, we would go one step further and ask: what does this mean for us today? What does it mean for me in my life? So Lord, You take over; you be our teacher this morning, for we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

This is one of the few passages that surface when we come to the day of Pentecost, which the church celebrates today, fifty days after the resurrection. It's a day that we celebrate the birth of the church, because the church was birthed on this day. But the day of Pentecost was not a day that was remembered for the day of the birth of the church when it happened. The Pentecost was something else.

Pentecost has to do with the Feast of Weeks, which was the feast when Jews from all over congregated in Jerusalem and worshipped God and thanked Him for the wheat harvest that had just begun. The priest would take two loaves of wheat bread and offer it up to the Lord. This was the Feast of Weeks, and it came after the Feast of the first fruits, which was the barley harvest, and that came after Passover.

We see that Jesus superimposed Himself in a strange way on all of these three feasts - from the Passover to the Feast of the Weeks. The Passover was held when He was crucified; "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" – that's what John the Baptist said about Jesus, the Lamb of God, and he gave Himself as the Passover Lamb.

Then the First Fruits, which was the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Paul puts that in perspective for us. *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are at Christ’s at His coming.”* So Jesus’ resurrection came on the Feast of First Fruits.

Then the feast of the wheat harvest, which we celebrate as Pentecost. So everyone was in Jerusalem for this feast, from all over the place. And as they reached, there was a noise like rushing wind (there wasn’t wind, just the noise of it) that filled the room. And then tongues of fire settled on every one of those disciples. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. They were all speaking in different languages.

The Bible tells us that there were almost 15 geographical locations that were represented at that time. And they were speaking in languages from those 15 different locations; speaking in tongues that the people from that location understood but they themselves had no idea what they were talking about. The people were amazed and astonished because they were Galileans: they wouldn’t know the other languages, they were not intellectual people, how could they be speaking in those languages? They ask the question: how then we hear them in our native languages and speaking the mighty deeds of God? All of them in different languages, but speaking the mighty deeds of God. That’s always what the Holy Spirit does. He draws our attention and then takes it to God; brings back to us the truths about what Jesus said so that it helps us along this journey. Then there were two responses: some of them were amazed and perplexed and asked the question, “What does this mean?” Others mocked and said, “They are just full of sweet wine.”

What can we learn from something like this? So often we look at this passage and we pray for the Spirit to fall on us as it did at Pentecost. At times, we may ask, “Can I have that?” I like what the late Dr. Warren Wiersbe said in his commentary. He said, “We must not conclude that this ten day prayer meeting brought about the miracles of Pentecost, or that today, we pray as they did to experience another Pentecost. Like our Lord’s death at Calvary, Pentecost was a once-for-all event that will not be repeated. The church may experience new fillings of the Spirit, and certainly patient prayer is an essential element to spiritual power. But we should not ask for another Pentecost any more than we should ask for another Calvary.”

So what do we make of this passage? How do we take it and apply it to our heart? What is God saying to us this morning? I think there are a couple of things that He wants us to land on. The first is the change in the function and use of the Holy Spirit. There are two things that happened:

- (i) The Holy Spirit came to dwell within people. Till that time, if you read the passage of scripture about the Spirit of God in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon people and they spoke the words that God was giving them, verbatim. For the first time, the Holy Spirit is now indwelling people.
- (ii) The presence of the Spirit moved from just being temporal to being permanent. Now the presence of the Holy Spirit in us is permanent. Once we have the Spirit of God within us, and we know that when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives, God gives us His Holy Spirit. His Spirit indwells us, and it is permanent. John 14:16-17 is a good passage the next time you wonder about this.

Jesus says, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."

So the Spirit of God began to indwell His people and the Holy Spirit became a permanent resident in our lives. That is why, in Psalm, we hear David crying out and saying, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." The Spirit of God came upon people in the Old Testament. But for you and me, who know and have the Spirit of God within us, the Spirit of God stays within us as a permanent resident.

We had a wonderful friend when we were at seminary, Dr. J.T. Seamands, and he would say, "The Holy Spirit is always a permanent resident in your life. But the question is: is He the President of your life?" it is one thing to have the Holy Spirit within you, but it is entirely another thing to the Holy Spirit access too. That is why, in Revelation 3:20 *Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me."*

Who is Jesus speaking to? The church at Laodicea. We need to ask the question – what is Jesus doing outside the church? It is because we give access. The Spirit of God is resident in us, but have we given Him the entire bunch of keys to every room in our hearts and our lives? He is a permanent resident, but does He have control in our lives?

So these two changes that came from that day of Pentecost. What does that mean for us today? What does the Holy Spirit bring to this equation? How do we allow this opening of our lives to Him? I want to share a couple of things that comes as a ministry of the Holy Spirit to us as disciples and believers of Jesus Christ.

Ministry Among Believers

- Bears witness Romans 8:16
- Teaches John 14:16-26
- Gives joy Romans 14:17
- Gives discernment 1 Cor 2:10-16
- Bears fruit Galatians 5:22
- Gives gifts 1 Cor 12:3-11
- Regenerates John 3:3,5
- Indwells Romans 8:11
- Anoints 1 John 2:20,27
- Baptizes Acts 2:17-41
- Guides John 16:13
- Empowers Micah 3:8
- Sanctifies Romans 15:16

How many of these functions can we tick off as happening in our lives? This is what the Holy Spirit brings to bear. All of this is taken from Scripture. We need to ask ourselves how much of our lives does He actually have control over?

So let's look at a few of these areas.

1. He Bears Witness.

For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. Romans 8:16

Has that relationship that you have with Jesus taken a beating from Satan? I have had Christians who have come to me and said, “Is God really my Father? Am I His child?” And that’s where Satan would attack us and say, “No, He’s not your Father.” What we need to do is to turn to scripture and know that it’s the job of the Spirit of God to continue to affirm that we are God’s children.

2. He is our Teacher.

But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative – that is, the Holy Spirit – He will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you. John 14:26

Beloved, before we read scripture for a Bible study, we need to say, “Holy Spirit, would You help me understand this?” That’s His job, His function – to be able to take these precious words and open them and amplify them, illuminate our hearts and allow us to know Him. He is our teacher. And He is willing to teach each one of us as we look at scripture and wonder what it means for us. He is our teacher as we navigate through God’s holy book and through life.

3. He gives Joy.

For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17

The beauty of the joy that the Holy Spirit brings is not based on circumstance or the situation that you are going through. However dark, dreary and overwhelming the situation may be, with the Spirit of God within you, your joy can never be taken away – joy in the relationship that you have as a son/daughter of the most high God; joy in knowing that even though you are walking through the deep valleys and dark shadows, it will not in any way overwhelm you; joy in knowing that you can completely trust Him. That’s what the Holy Spirit does with you.

4. He gives Discernment.

And we have received God’s Spirit (not the world’s spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. 1 Cor. 2:12

The psalmist says, “What are those wonderful things that the Lord has given us?” I love the song ‘Blessings’ by Laura Story. In it she says, “What if the blessings that God has given me are not the things that I am looking for. What if He is continually blessing me, but I am so myopic in my view that I don’t see it.” such beautiful lines – or do we just say that the blessings I am asking for are not coming through. God is pouring out wonderful things upon us

5. Bears Fruit.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Gal. 5:22-23a

Does He have that kind of permission in your heart to produce gentleness? Are you gentle in spirit? What about kindness? All we have to do is to allow the Holy Spirit to work on this, give Him access to those parts of us that prevent kindness, and say, “You work in me, because kindness isn’t coming from me; it’s got to come from You.” Or love for people who are unlovable. You find it so difficult to deal with

people who continually hurt you. The only prayer at that time is to say, "Lord, would You allow Your Holy Spirit to do it, because by myself, I cannot." Joy, peace, self-control over things that constantly try and take over? Addictive behaviors! Will you ask the Holy Spirit to bridle your thoughts, to be the first filter when those kind of thoughts come your way?

6. He gives Gifts.

It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have. 1 Cor. 12:11

For those of you who have been here at CAP for any length of time, or been through our membership classes, you would know how important a score we place on gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us. He gives us gifts for our edification, for the beauty of the church, that the church may rise and be all that it is supposed to be. And it cannot if we don't use the gifts. So we constantly push that you utilize the gifts God has given you. Paul likens to to parts of our body – some are hands, some are feet, eyes, ears. All function together so that the glory of the church is made manifest and Jesus is lifted up.

The Holy Spirit does so many things in our lives. And knowing that He is there, as a permanent resident must make us ask the question: Have I given Him every part of my life? Or are there rooms in my life that are just me, my flesh?

I think there are two responses that we too can have, as we look at this scripture.

- Amazement and Perplexity – to be amazed on the one hand and perplexed on the other!
- Mockery and Rejection – to just mock and reject.

But there are two consequences that come for those responses:

- Amazement and perplexity must give way to understanding and acceptance, and a fulfillment of all of God's plans.
Sometimes we think that God's plans are that we look perfect, that everything is going very well. And sometimes God's plans are that He is able to showcase the way we deal with the wilderness experience; that others would say, "My goodness! In your situation, I would have lost it. I don't know how you are still walking in faith." And God is glorified because He is the One who helps to sustain us. It could be that that is the reason for the wilderness experience. But God's will and God's purposes are always fulfilled. And God's blessings are always there when they come together.
- Mockery and rejection will leave us as impoverished Christians whose light is hidden under a bushel; the world will never see it. We will not be the city on the hill. We will not be light in darkened places; we live impoverished lives.

So the onus is on us this day, as we look at what happened on the day of Pentecost many years ago, to say: What must I do today to have an enriching experience with God's Holy Spirit? What do I do to be able to just walk in newness of life? How do I empower the Holy Spirit? How do I give Him more control? How do I fill myself? What are the things that I need to give up so that I become empty and then be filled? That's why we have multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit. If God points out to an area that we need to give up, we give it up. Then we ask the Spirit of God to fill us. I wonder whether there are those things that we need to hand over to Him today, that He can come and fill us. On one hand – just an impoverished

Christian life, a life of mediocrity. And on the other, an actualization of the plans and purposes that the Almighty God has for us.

Shall we pray?

Our heavenly Father, as we come to you this morning, we recognize that there are many areas in our lives that we have zealously held onto, that we haven't allowed You to mold it. We haven't allowed You to bring it to its potential and to optimize it. Lord, we are sorry. We confess Lord, that we have been egotistical about these things. We have tried to pilot our own ships, our own lives, and have not done well. Master, the joy and peace and all those beautiful attributes that only You can give have been lost to us. So this morning, we want to take this opportunity to just give up those things that You would put Your finger on and say that it doesn't belong to You. That's a locked door.

So church, would you just listen to the Spirit of God and as He points out an area, would you give it to Him and say – let your will be done in this area; I give it to You. Let's just pause in the quietness of these moments and engage with His Spirit.

Lord, we give You ourselves, our lives, every part. We don't want You to be a dormant resident; we want you to be active. We want You to have all of us, that we can walk in glorious optimization of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. And that is our prayer. We pray this prayer in Your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.