

ENGAGING PENTECOST

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Scripture: Acts 2

Today is Pentecost Sunday. We looked at Ascension last week, and we said that forty days after the resurrection came the ascension of Jesus. And then ten days after the ascension was Pentecost. Before we look into the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, let me just preface it with a little bit of history. Pentecost means something different in Jewish understanding, and something different in our Christian worldview.

When we look at the day of Pentecost in the Old Testament, we know that it had to do with the children of Israel coming out of Egypt. That was the day of Passover when God brought them out of the land of Egypt. Then, after 50 days, the law was given at Mount Sinai, and this began the day of Pentecost. So they celebrate the feast of Pentecost as a time when the law was given to them, and the festival of Pentecost, or Pentecoste in the Greek which means fiftieth, is the 50th day after their movement out of Egypt. But for us it is something different, although the numbers are pretty much the same. Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus comes the Pentecost Day, or the day that the Holy Spirit came down.

I want us to remember what Jesus said on the day of Ascension. He said, "Wait in Jerusalem and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the other outer parts of the world." Wait in Jerusalem to receive power to be My witnesses. So wait! Don't do anything without the power that will come to you. Then when you get the power, it will enable you to be My witnesses, witnesses of Me and all that I have done to neighboring places, and then to the rest of the world.

I want us to listen to the second chapter of Acts from a slightly different perspective. (Video playing of Acts 2 being read in different Indian languages).

As we look at that passage, we see that there's a spectacular, there's a flamboyance about it, about the Holy Spirit coming that is captured withing this passage as we see flames of fire settled on the disciples. They began to speak in different tongues, and the people there were just amazed. There were people from all over who had come for the feast and they were listening to this and saying, "My goodness, that's my language. That's my language. That's my language." All of this came with the coming of the Holy Spirit. But I want us to look beyond the flamboyance, look beyond the spectacular, and ask ourselves the question:

- As we look at the Holy Spirit, how do we understand this power? How does this power get manifested in and through us?
- What was the response to the manifestation of that power as it came down on the disciples?

Then we will look at the offices of the Holy Spirit as it pertains very specifically to you and to me today in the midst of the circumstances that we are in.

HOW WAS THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MANIFESTED ON THAT DAY?

1. It enabled them to communicate.

It gave them the ability to communicate. Suddenly a group of Galileans began to make sense to the Parthians and the Medes and Elamites, and then residents of Mesopotamia and Cappadocia and all over the place of that world. In fact, sixteen different language groups were represented, and all of

them heard their own language and the disciples, these unschooled Galileans talking. It allowed them to communicate. The power of the Holy Spirit suddenly gave them the ability to communicate.

I was hoping that as we played the passage, and you heard all the Indian languages that you know, and you heard your language – you sat up and said, “That’s my language. That’s my mother-tongue, that’s where I come from – that you would have sensed the same excitement that the people there must have felt when they heard the disciples talking in their languages. Suddenly God was making the disciples communicate to different groups of people in a remarkable way. So the power of the Holy Spirit as it came down on the people on that first day allowed them to communicate.

Why communicate? So that they could be good witnesses of Jesus and all that He had done. It was not an end in itself – the spectacle, the flamboyance of being able to talk in different languages – that wasn’t an end. “You will receive power and through that power, you will be able to be My witnesses. You will testify to the world about Me,” is what Jesus said.

So beloved, the same rests with you and me, that the Holy Spirit within us is able to give us the ability to communicate. Maybe not in a different language, but to communicate in ways that we need to communicate, whether it’s by words, by behavior, attitude, demeanor, lifestyle, the decisions that you make – all of these communicate. The question we need to ask is: Are we allowing the power of the Holy Spirit within us to help us communicate and testify to what Jesus did for each one of us? Are we witnesses to Him?

I love watching courtroom dramas like Boston Legal and LA Law, and all of those. But the one thing that you’ll always note is that witnesses come under a lot of stress, because when a prosecution puts forward a witness, the defense does everything to tear down that witness, discredit that witness or that testimony. And the same with the defense witness. Witnesses are always in a difficult place. They find it so difficult to be able to communicate what they saw or heard because there’s so much opposition to being able to testify. The Holy Spirit is given to you and to me so that we can communicate and testify to the things that Jesus has done in my life and in yours.

2. It took away their fear.

The power that God manifested in the disciples took away their fear. These men who had been sitting and hiding in rooms, suddenly they were men of authority. When the Holy Spirit came, and people were looking at their behavior somewhat deriding, mocking; suddenly Peter was unafraid. The same Peter who denied Jesus, that same Peter gets up and says, “Men of Galilee, hear! This same Jesus....” And he preaches to that crowd. Suddenly fear vanished. When the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, it took away their fear.

Paul encouraged Timothy by saying, “For God did not give us a Spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but He has given us a Spirit of power and love and of sound judgment and personal discipline – abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind, and self-control.” Fear was taken out.

I wonder whether we need to be able to take a hard look at maybe a reason we don’t testify, and ask the question: Is it because of fear? Am I fearful? Then, with this realization that the Holy Spirit is in me as well as in you, and is able to take away that fear, whether indeed we need to do something about it. Allow Him, give Him full reign and say, “Take away the fear so that I can continue to testify to Him.

What was the response to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit?

There was also response from people. Sometimes when we think that when we testify about what Jesus has done, that it will be well received; that people will say, "O my goodness! I love what I'm hearing from you. God is this in your life? I also want to experience it." And yet, in spite of what they heard that day, there were many who just laughed at them – "These men are drunk." There's a negative response also that may come from us not only experiencing the power to communicate without fear, but also to be able to say that there may be some who will not accept, there may be some who will laugh, there may be some who will mock and deride and scorn. But that's okay. My call is not to respond to how they will respond; my call is to respond to the power of the Holy Spirit in me, and the words of Jesus saying: Receive power so that you can be My witness wherever you are and wherever you go.

As we look at those two areas – how did the power manifest, and then, what was the response of people to the power that they saw? But we still need to go on and ask the question: what can I expect from the Holy Spirit who is in me now? How is He going to lead me? What does the Bible tell me about the things that He can do for me? Am I missing something on this Pentecost day? Is there an understanding I don't have?

I was looking at this from different writers, and it was interesting the list of things that came up – five things that the Holy Spirit does in your live, seven things, nine things, seventeen things that the Holy Spirit does. There are so many things that the Holy Spirit does in our lives and all of that valid because the Holy Spirit resides in your heart and mine, for a particular reason – to continue to let us have the presence of God within us, until one day we will be together in heaven with Jesus.

What can I expect from the Holy Spirit? Let's look at a few areas:

3. The Holy Spirit reveals truth.

When we look at the fifth chapter of Acts, we see Ananias and Sapphira. Everybody was selling things and bringing it and leaving it with the disciples. They were living together, and these two did the same. But they hid some of it. They didn't give everything while saying that it was all there. And yet without anybody saying anything, it was revealed to Peter. He questioned them, not just Ananias, but Sapphira as well. The Holy Spirit is able to bring out truth.

Think about today. There's so much of fake news that it's now become a term – fake news. Everything that comes to us, we need to ask the question: Is this true? and today, the lines have got so blurred; people don't care whether they are passing on wrong information or not. If there ever was a time to be able to distinguish between truth and lie, it is today. That's something that the Holy Spirit can help us with, to distinguish between truth and lie.

And not just what's out there, but even for you and for me. What lies are we believing? Are the things that we do founded on truth, or are they founded on lies? Some years back, we were ministering to a lady who had an evil spirit in her. In the course of it, as we were worshipping, I questioned the spirit, "What right do you have to be in her?" And this spirit replied, "She believes my lies." How catastrophic to live your life founded on the lies of Satan!

But the Holy Spirit within you and within me can reveal truth because He is truth. he brings truth to us in all the situations that we are in. I wonder today, whether you need to look at your life and say, "Am I believing lies about myself, about friends, about situations, about circumstances? Or are my assumptions, or my reactions, or my behavior founded on truth that God has revealed to me?"

4. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of the sins that we may indulge in. Post-regeneration, post saying to Jesus, "I accept You as my personal Savior. I accept what You did on the cross," and I'm talking right now to people who have the Holy Spirit because they have accepted Jesus as Savior. Ephesians 1 says that if we have accepted Jesus and His salvation, then God gives us His Holy Spirit. But as we continue on in the world, we are still facing temptation. We are still prone to sin. Sometimes we get so caught up that sin begins to be kind of an accessory to our lives, and we carry on. But the Holy Spirit points out to us that that thing is sinful, that area is sinful, and that relationship is sinful.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. He continues this work after salvation as part of the work of sanctification that we must go through. And we live from the point of being justified to the point when we will go up to heaven. Through the word of God, the Holy Spirit makes us see, identify or detect sinful behavior, while at the same time leading us to a change of heart. So He points out to us what's not right, what is sinful. Then He brings about a new yearning for something that is more wholesome and pure.

Martin Luther, that great reformer, wrote, "It is of no significance that we feel evil lusts provided we endeavor to resist them. One must not go by his feelings and consider himself lost if he has sinful desires. At the same time, he must so long as life lasts, contend with the sins he perceives in himself." In other words – don't get to the point where you look at your sin and then dismiss yourself and say, "My goodness! This cannot be me. I'm supposed to be saved." He says that as long as you are in this life, you will be prone to its evil. Then he says, "He must unceasingly groan to be relieved of them and must permit the Holy Spirit to operate in him."

There is in believers, continual groaning after holiness, groaning too deep for expression, as Paul says in Romans 8:26. "But Christians have a blessed listener, the Holy Spirit, Himself. He readily perceives sincere longing after purity, and sends the conscience divine comfort." The Holy Spirit is there, not only to ruffle the waters of a complacent life so that sin comes to the fore and we can deal with it, but also to draw us close and say, "It's okay. Don't be too hard on yourself. Ask God for forgiveness." Then He brings wonderful comfort to us even as He moves us along the path of holiness and purity after God and divine comfort. The Holy Spirit convicts the sinner of sin.

5. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray.

He helps us to pray. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we are to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

We are weak when it comes to our prayer life. So many of us find it difficult to pray. But the Holy Spirit understands that weakness, and intercedes for us and helps us, searches our hearts and then connects us – knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. So the Holy Spirit brings us to the point where we join with Him because He is interceding along the will of God for you and for me. That's the place of the Holy Spirit in helping us to pray.

He helps bring to mind people who need prayer. You suddenly think about somebody and you wonder why you are thinking of them. Don't waste any more time asking that question. Simply take that person to the Lord and pray, because that's the way God's Spirit works. Somewhere out there is a person who needs prayer, and God looks for a faithful son/daughter of His who will intercede. And

He taps you and brings this person to mind. Pray for them whatever it is they are going through. I pray that you would hear whatever the Holy Spirit is placing on your heart.

He helps us to know how to pray for people. Sometimes He reveals that. He tells you very clearly this is the area. Pray specifically. Sometimes it's very general. He just brings this person to mind. But at other times, He will tell you specifically what that need is. However way out it might be, pray for that person. I've told you a couple of times of a time when we were praying in threes. The speaker had told us to just pray, trust the Holy Spirit. I prayed for somebody's ulcer, and the person was visibly moved, because they had an ulcer. And then that person prayed for me and a ministry in India when I hadn't shared anything. So the Holy Spirit helps us to know what to pray at times, and then He helps us to pray in accordance with the will of God. That is so important. When our will and God's will is aligned, then things happen.

He strengthens us when we are weak in prayer. Sometimes we are so weary when it comes to prayer. We are not diligent enough; we get lazy about it. Sometimes we are really weak; we don't have the strength to pray. Yet the Holy Spirit comes along and helps us in that time.

So, on this day of Pentecost, we look at these five areas that the Holy Spirit moves in us to help us to communicate, to face fears, to reveal truth and expose lies, to bring conviction of sin, to help us pray. I wonder whether you were thinking, "My goodness! I have never really handed over that area to the Holy Spirit. I've always looked at myself and said that I can't communicate. Maybe I've not asked the Holy Spirit power to be released in me, to communicate. Maybe I've always been shut down by my fears and I've never looked to God and asked Him to help me overcome my fears."

Or maybe today, you suddenly thought: I wonder whether that's a lie that I've been living in that has a foundation in my life. I wonder whether you need to look to the Holy Spirit and say: Will You show me whether this is a lie or the truth. Or I wonder whether you need to just say: Holy Spirit, would You expose the sins of my life? Maybe there are things that have just become a part of who I am. Would You expose them? Or maybe you have this deep yearning to be a person of prayer, and you've tried it in your own strength, and it's always been difficult. I wonder whether today you should turn to the Holy Spirit and say: Help me pray. I want to be a prayer warrior, an intercessor. Will You help me?

So beloved, just take a moment and look at those areas of communication, fear, truth, sin and prayer, and see where you need to ask the Holy Spirit to do more. See where you need to release the Holy Spirit, give Him permission to work with authority in your life. Maybe this day of Pentecost will be a day of great victory and freedom to be the son/daughter that God intends for you and me to be.

Let's pray together.

Come Holy Spirit. We've already invited You into our midst. Now would You just move among us in every heart, ruffle the waters. Let faith arise, dispel fear, show sin up for what it is, and lies as well. Lord, help us to pray. Help us to tap into the power that comes from You residing in us. If there are any out there who are saying, "I don't have the Holy Spirit. I don't know Jesus," I pray Lord that You would touch their hearts. I say to you all you need to do is invite Him into your heart, and when He comes in, the Holy Spirit resides as well. Father, help us to be true disciples of Yours, working and living in the power of Your Holy Spirit, with the beautiful face of Your son reflected in everything that we do. And it's in His name as always that we pray. Amen.