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The Day of Pentecost (Series A)

June 4, 2017

Text: Acts 2:1–21

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus gave a wondrous promise on the last day of the Jewish feast of Booths, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink” (Jn. 7:37). The promised drink of refreshment was the Holy Spirit. But when Jesus gave that promise, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. John makes that point clear, “Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (vs. 39).

The Old Testament witness is abundantly clear that the Holy Spirit was working to create and sustain faith in God's people. But God had given a promise that the Holy Spirit would come in a new and remarkable way upon His people in the Last Days.

Pentecost is the day in which God the Father fulfills the promise of His Son Jesus to give His people the refreshing drink of the Holy Spirit. For the Lord Jesus was glorified on Good Friday and Easter. Now the time of refreshment is to begin. Look at Acts 2:1–4, “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they (120 disciples of Jesus including the apostles and the Mary the mother of Jesus) were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

The refreshment has come dear saints of God! Today, the 50<sup>th</sup> day since Easter, we drink again from the living waters of the Holy Spirit. Today, we come to be refreshed and renewed for life in Christ's Church.

So we might ask, “Where is the mighty rushing wind? Where are the tongues of fire and the foreign languages in this service?” Those remarkable events recorded in Acts 2 were the signs of the Holy Spirit. Now that He has come, as Christ promised, those signs are no longer needed. We need to ask a different question. How does the Holy Spirit come to us today in the post-Pentecost Church? Preaching, but of a particular

kind. The Holy Spirit comes today through the preaching of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for the salvation of the entire world.

It is not by accident that Acts 2:5–11 describes people from all over the Roman Empire hearing about Jesus. Through the grace of the Spirit, the Church preaches, sings prays, and praises the Lord Jesus for the salvation He won for the world. Those Jews from all various parts of the world were astonished at what they heard, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?...we hear them (120 disciples) telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God” (vs. 7–11). We see and learn from Acts 2 that the Holy Spirit brings refreshment – saving faith – through preaching about Christ and Him crucified. First, in the words of the 120 disciples; then most clearly in Peter's Pentecost sermon, which we'll consider in a few moments.

That God chose, in His own wisdom and freedom, preaching to be the vehicle of bringing salvation to lost sinners is an intriguing thought. Why not signs and wonders? Like those manifestations on the Day of Pentecost? Why not visual representations? Movies, theatre, etc. Why not music? Jesus gave His disciples the command to preach the gospel to all nations, to baptize them in water combined with God's Trinitarian name, to teach them everything that He (i.e., Jesus) taught. In her mission to evangelize the world, the Church certainly uses music in hymns, psalms and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16), she uses the visual arts (paintings, stained glass windows, illustrations such as those on our bulletin covers), and the Church prays for miracles that may, in fact, happen from time to time, as recorded in the Book of Acts and Church history. But those great gifts are not THE refreshment promised through the Spirit. Only preaching can do that. These other gifts support the preaching and teaching of God's Word but they must not replace God's Word.

The Church is given the task of proclaiming God's promises in Christ Jesus through Spirit-inspired words of truth and love. Through the preached and believed Word of God, God dwells within our hearts and minds, our bodies and souls. Saving faith, the forgiveness of sins, hope for today, strength for tomorrow, and joy that transcends the trials and afflictions of day-to-day life, are given to us by the Spirit through the preached word of Christ's Gospel. That message – that word – of grace is what we are given to receive, to live in, and to share with the people we meet. It's our Spirit-filled refreshment.

But words are funny things. No matter how precise we try to be, no matter how clear and unambiguous the words may be, people don't always hear the same thing. For example, Acts 2:41 says that 3,000 heard and believed Peter's preaching and were baptized, all in a single day. But some heard the Spirit-inspired testimony of the 120 disciples and mocked. Vs. 13, "But others mocking said, 'They are filled with new wine.'" These folks accuse the Christians of being drunk on the cheapest wine. The mockers and the 3,000 believers heard the same words but responded quite differently.

If there would be anytime to roll out a miracle or two, it would be now. I'll show those mockers a thing or two, bang, a miracle! Instead, Peter preaches a sermon based upon an OT text, Joel 2. "But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known you, and give ear to my words...this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel'" (vs. 14, 16). Peter doesn't even mention the tongues of fire or the rushing wind of heaven or even the miracle of human tongues understandable by everyone regardless of their nationality. Instead, Peter preaches the Good News about Jesus and the coming the Holy Spirit as promised in Joel 2. Those 3,000 who heard and believed received the promised refreshment of life in the Spirit.

Saints of God, we are entering into the Pentecost season of the Church year. The Pentecost season is the time we give special attention to God's Word as it describes our day-to-day life in the Holy Spirit. So it would be good and appropriate that we enter into this season with repentance and rock solid faith.

All of us need repentance for we so easily fail to speak the Gospel to our family and friends and neighbors. When was the last time you told someone the basics of the Gospel? Evangelism begins at home. Have you told your loved ones in word and deed that Jesus died for them, loves them, and gives them the Holy Spirit unto eternal life? Is there a need for reconciliation? For the Spirit-filled refreshment that comes through sharing forgiveness with someone you have hurt or with someone who has hurt you.

When was the last time you witnessed to someone about the Gospel of eternal life? Or invited someone to Church? Or expressed the love of Jesus to others outside your home in words and deeds? All of you know me well enough to know that I do not use guilt or shame. Guilt is not a good motivation for evangelism and good works; Spirit-filled love and truth are. But this is the time for us to share His Gospel truth. Now is

the time to live lives of faith and godliness before a world that needs to the refreshment of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul compares and contrasts the refreshing life of the Spirit with the dry, dead works of the flesh in Galatians 5:16–26:

<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

In rock solid faith, let us embrace this moment to walk in the refreshment of the Holy Spirit. Some will hear and believe God's Word. Some will not; they may even mock and deride our message and our life of faith. Our task is to receive His promises in faith, to be refreshed and renewed in them, and live faithfully because of them. The Holy Spirit will complete His gracious work when and where it pleases Him. Like those first Christians on the Day of Pentecost, let us hear God's Word and be refreshed by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.