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The Day of Pentecost (Series C)

May 15, 2016

Text: Acts 2:1–21

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

Today is the Day of Pentecost, our annual celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit to enliven and empower God's Church. It's been 50 days since Easter, the triumph of Jesus over death and the grave. For 50 days, we've rejoiced in the risen Savior. Jesus has done everything in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father's right hand to fulfill human destiny, to satisfy the deepest longings of the human soul. Now we need to tell the world about it, to preach it. To proclaim it on the house tops so that every human ear can hear that Christ has triumphed over sin, death, and the grave to the fulfillment of human joy and destiny. God's gracious kingdom has come to this world! But that kind of preaching requires the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost is the day in which God the Father fulfills the promise of His Son Jesus to give His people power from on high. And that power comes in a rather remarkable though unexpected way. 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 Holy Spirit is the power of the Church that enables the Church to live in and proclaim the reign of Christ to all eternity. The mighty rushing wind from heaven is the Holy Spirit, the 3rd Person of the Holy Trinity. Fifty days after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to fill the hearts and minds of Christ's people with the breath of life. So know this for certain saints of God, you are a Spirit-filled people; living temples of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in I Cor. 6:19.

On this first day of Spirit-filled life, the Church begins to proclaim the wonders of Christ's triumph over death and the grave. Vs. 5–6 says that people from all over the Roman Empire were in Jerusalem. They hear the wonders of Jesus each in their own

language, their own dialects. In the power of the Spirit, the Church preaches, sings prays, and praises the Lord Jesus for His triumph. Look at vs. 7–8, “And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?’” After listing a dozen or so geographic regions and a couple of ethnic distinctions in vs. 8–11, the crowd declares, “we hear them (120 disciples) telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” We see and learn from Acts 2 that the Holy Spirit works through words, that is, the Holy Spirit creates and sustains saving faith through preaching and hearing in faith.

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? Why not visual representations? Movies, theatre, etc. Why not music? Symphonies, ballads. 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), 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 do not create and sustain Christ’s Spirit-filled Church. Only preaching and teaching 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 this mighty victory through Spirit-inspired words of truth and love and grace and enduring hope. In today’s gospel reading, Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14:23). Through the preached and believed Word of God, God dwells within our hearts and minds, our bodies and souls. “We will come and make our home with him” said Jesus. Did you notice the plural “we”? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have taken up residence within you! You are never alone. God goes with you graciously, lovingly, powerfully into every detail of your life. That message – that word – of grace is what we are given to receive, to live in, and to share with the people we meet.

And I say to again, what I’ve said numerous times, that living and sharing of God’s Word begins at home, then moves out to our friends, then to our acquaintances, and then to every stranger we meet. And you have the Lord’s promise to be with you as

you share and live out God's Word, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn. 14:26).

But we must know that words are funny things. No matter how precise you 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 Peter's preaching 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 Spirit-inspired words. Vs. 14, "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...'" He 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 of Jesus from the Old Testament, the prophet Joel 2 to be precise.

Peter proclaims that the Lord promised to pour out His Spirit upon His Sons and daughters in the Last Days (vs. 17) so that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (vs. 21). Those words led the 3,000 to be baptized with water and words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit and words go hand-in-glove. The Lord works through us, through our words and our deeds which are in turn, informed, directed, and motivated by words of Gospel truth.

We are entering into the Pentecost season of the Church year. The Pentecost season is the time we give special attention to our day-to-day life in the Spirit. God's Word will direct and guide us. So it would be good and appropriate, after hearing God's Word today, 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 friends and family and neighbors. When was the last time you told someone the basics of the Gospel? Jesus loves them so much that He died to forgive their sins. Jesus loves them

so much that He rose again on the 3rd day to destroy the work of death and the grave so that they can have an eternal inheritance in heaven? When was the last time you witnessed to someone, invited them to Church, expressed the love of Jesus in words and deeds? All of you know me well enough to know that I do not intentionally use guilt or shame. Guilt is not a good motivation for evangelism, love and truth are. But now is the time the Lord has given to us to share His Gospel truth. Now is the time to share Holy Spirit inspired words of witness, love, joy, peace, and forgiveness.

In rock solid faith, let us embrace this moment. Some will hear and believe God's Word. Some will not; they may even mock and deride our message. Our task is to proclaim God's Word trusting the Holy Spirit to do His gracious work when and where it pleases him. The result of our faithful use of God's Word is left in God's hands. Like those first Christians on the Day of Pentecost, let us hear God's Word and live in the power and grace of the promised 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.