

+ In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti + Amen.

Text: Acts 2:17

Theme: The Spirit Poured Out



Dear people blessed by the Spirit,

Jesus summoned the Spirit. The Father released Him. He hovered over the waters of creation. He animated the prophets. He confused languages at Babel. He directed the patriarchs and matriarchs. He rebuked the king. He forgave the king. He departed from the temple. He returned to the temple. He comforted the exiles. He sustained hope in the remnant. He overshadowed the Virgin. He left the human body of Jesus and returned to it on the third day. These things He did in the first age.

Again, Jesus summoned the Spirit. The Father released Him. He overshadowed the apostles. He came down as tongues of fire. He empowered the church. Visitors to the earthly Jerusalem were astounded. Hopefuls of the heavenly Jerusalem were vindicated. The gospel was proclaimed. Babel was reversed. Languages were multiplied for the cause unity. Faith was gifted. Unbelief was defeated. These things happened on Pentecost. The final age had begun.

Dear friends, we live in the final age. And we are no further from the power and presence of God than believers were on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is not one second older or one step slower than He was on that day or when He hovered over the waters at the first creation. He is not the tiniest bit fatigued. He is not a fraction impaired. He betrays not a trace of apathy. The Spirit's love burns with eternal brightness and warmth. His passion is undiminished. His passion burns for you.

It's no coincidence that there was quite a cosmopolitan crowd gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. The gospel is intended for every people group of every time and every place. No knowledge, no news, no blessing is more relevant or more essential than the gospel. It is meant for all ears and all hearts at all times. It's probably impossible for most of us to imagine what it was like to hear the gospel in your mother tongue for the first time. It is life changing. However, the gospel is not only the most relevant and essential declaration ever to be published it is also- because of its intent- the most vehemently opposed.

Even on the Day of Pentecost some thought the apostles were drunk. They apparently didn't believe God would manifest His power. Jesus said that when the Spirit came, He would "*convict the world of guilt in regard to sin.*"¹ Remember, the Holy Spirit is not how we wish Him to be. The Holy Spirit is as the Scriptures reveal a Him. Gods of our own making are

called idols and they are as fickle and fallible as the people who construct them. All of us are prone to god-making in one form or another. We might not recognize it as such, thinking we are only fortifying our ideals with religious, moral, or spiritual justification. Do we mine the Bible in search of evidence for our preconceived notions? Is the Bible used as a proof book for our otherwise established opinions and values?

Most pastors would be happy to know people were mining the Bible at all. But the Scriptures can be used to support a wide range of falsehoods when taken out of context. That tends to be our mode of operation especially when we reflect on our own sinfulness. We manipulate the context. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to disguise your repentance under the cloak of anonymity? To acknowledge generally, but not seriously and specifically, that you are a sinner?

Undoubtedly that's why Luther plies us with such direct and personal questions in the catechism. "Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?"² We're not just generic sinners, we think, plan, say, and do very specific sinful things. The Holy Spirit is not the affirmer of our inflated egos. He is a masterful surgeon. He humbles us so that God may lift us up in due time.

Have no doubt, people of God that the Holy Spirit is with you. If you honestly believe Christ is your Redeemer, you have the Holy Spirit. He is the Comforter, the Advocate, the Helper. The Holy Spirit is the giver of faith and the taker of doubt, the breath of life and the repeller of death. He strides through the dark world as a bearer of light- the light of Him who is the light of the world, the light of Him who is the light of men, Jesus, the Redeemer. Christ is the physician for those yearning to be rid of their cancer. He is the balm for those harried by the festering wounds of their sins. He is the medicine for those who are spiritually sick. He is light for those living in darkness and the shadow of death.

Pentecost was a grand and glorious day for the dissemination of the Good News. The work of prophets and angels was conferred on apostles and disciples. Angels, those sublime, swift and powerful creatures are privileged to proclaim that gospel. They attend the throne of God and yet they long to look into the mystery. Rightly understood, that is profoundly humbling. The atoning, sacrificial love of the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is so incomprehensible that angels struggle to understand it. No wonder the Holy Spirit is required for us to believe it. And yet it's not incomprehensible because it is a secret, or in doubt, or requires an academic degree to receive or benefit from it. It is the plainest, clearest message in the world. It is incomprehensible because it's far beyond our capacity to appreciate why God loves us so much!

What do the Scriptures say? *“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*³ Again, *“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*⁴ The Holy Spirit came to teach us these truths. He came to comfort us with the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. The Suffering Servant was crucified for you but gained victory over death on the third day.

The Spirit also came to lead us in battle, in the daily struggle of a cross-bearing life. Against the tendencies of our sinful natures the Holy Spirit seeks to sanctify us. From God’s perspective we are already declared righteous by grace, through faith for Christ’s sake. This is the miracle of God justifying sinners through His Son. Yet, from our perspective, it’s always a work in progress; messy, incomplete, unpredictable, and somewhat mysterious. Think only of question three in the confession and absolution: *“Do you intend with the help of the Holy Spirit to live as in God’s presence, and to strive daily to lead a holy life, even as Christ has made you holy?”*⁵ The tension will not be resolved until we transition to the next life.

Meanwhile, the Spirit will continue to work in and through you. It won’t always be painless. But He promises that at some point it will be rewarding. Will you have the strength, will you have the wisdom, will you have the courage, will you have the humility to love others as Christ has loved you? Will you be continually and cheerfully able to sacrifice your interests for the sake of others? Or will you be hindered by selfishness, by greed, by apathy, by hard-heartedness? Of course you will! God knows our limitations and we do well to learn them too. Don’t try to shoulder burdens that only God can lift. But don’t fear lifting the burdens of others who don’t have the strength. God will lift you up in due time.

The Holy Spirit won’t be controlled or manipulated by the strength or cleverness of men. He is grieved by rejection. He is driven away by steadfast unbelief. But He is not disheartened. He is never lacking in zeal. He binds Himself to the written word, the Holy Scriptures, and the Incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus. And through them He can thaw the coldest hearts and cheer the darkest minds. Joy, and peace, and hope always accompany Him.

These have been trying times for God’s baptised people all around the world. The promised Holy Spirit came to gather His church on Pentecost, and He has begun to gather it again. We pray that the struggles and lessons of isolation prove to be beneficial. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be blessed. So too, we pray that those who are hungering and thirsting for the Supper of our Lord and the close fellowship of the faithful will be overflowing with joy in the Spirit when we arrive at the appointed time. *“God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”*⁶ Amen.

+ In nomine Jesu +

The Day of Pentecost

31 May 2020

Reverend Darrin L. Kohrt

¹ John 16:8

³ 2 Corinthians 4:6

⁵ *LH* page 6

² *Luther's Small Catechism*

⁴ Titus 3:5-7

⁶ Romans 5:5

