



WHITSUNDAY - THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

May 27, 2012

Sermon Text: Acts 2:1-13

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.”

{PRAYER:} Oh Most Gracious God, our Heavenly Father, who did teach the hearts of Thy faithful people by sending to them the light of the Holy Spirit, open our hearts this day to Your Holy Word and grant us by Thy Holy Spirit to have a right judgment in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth forevermore. Amen

REJOICE IN THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

At Christmas all of Christendom rejoices at the birth of the Christ Child who would suffer and die for the sins of the whole world. At Easter, we rejoice at His glorious resurrection and look forward with sureness of faith and hope to our own resurrection, confident that although we merit nothing in or of ourselves, the precious sacrifice made for us by our Lord and Savior on the Cross of Calvary has secured for us a place in the heavenly mansions of our Father's Kingdom.

And last Sunday we celebrated Our Lord's ascension to the right hand of the Father, where He governs all things to the glory of His Bride, the Church.

Today, we have great cause to rejoice as well. For today, on the fiftieth day after the Old Testament festival of the Passover, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's Church in the festival of Pentecost.

He is the Comforter, the One promised by our Savior before His ascension into heaven, whom our heavenly Father sent in His dear Son's name, even as we read in verse 26 of our Gospel reading for today:

" But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, who the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Therefore, dear-Christians, let us rejoice in the coming of the Holy Spirit, for He comes to lead you to your Savior, Jesus Christ and He comes to keep you in the communion of saints, the Invisible Church.

After Christ's ascension into heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem to wait as they had been instructed by the Lord. On the tenth day, as they were assembled together in one place the miracle of Pentecost came upon them. The Holy Spirit descended upon them, opening their hearts and minds and touching their lips, that they should preach the Good News of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation given to the entire world in the suffering and death of Jesus, the Messiah,

And not in one language only, but the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to tell the Gospel message in the native tongues of all the different peoples who were gathered together at Jerusalem from near and far.

There were people who had been raised from childhood as Jews, as well as strangers of Rome, converts from as far away as Libya and Asia.

Undoubtedly, many Jews chose to live out their lives in the Holy City of their fathers. Perhaps those from afar had come on this occasion to be in Jerusalem to keep the feast days as appointed by God in Exodus 23:14-17.

Whatever the reason for their presence in Jerusalem, our text tells us that they were devout men out of every nation under heaven.

And so, the Holy Spirit uses this unique situation to make known to all, to each man in his own native language, the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thus by the preaching of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit would lead the different people gathered there in Jerusalem to their Savior, Jesus. And it is by the Holy Spirit through His Word still, that He brings all mankind; regardless of race, language or cultural difference to salvation today.

Now the Holy Spirit who had given the disciples this sudden ability to speak in foreign languages, was and is, not simply an effect or power of God, but the Holy Spirit is Very God of Very God. He is the third person of the Holy Trinity.

Scripture speak of the Holy Spirit as a person, for He teaches mankind. As we read in John 14:26, "He shall teach you all things." And He continues to teach you and me today through His Holy Word.

And the Holy Spirit testifies, gives us sure witness of the Gospel message, as we read in John 15:26, where Jesus says "... He shall testify of me..." .

And this He does as He makes known to us the unmerited act of love and sacrifice performed for us by our Savior.

According to Romans 8:14, the Holy Spirit leads us to Jesus through His Holy Word.

And the Holy Spirit knows the things of God, " For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (I Cor. 2:11)

The Holy Spirit speaks, as we read in Acts 13:2,

"...the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabus and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

He also forbids, as we read in Acts 16:6, where Paul and others with him "...were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. He can be resisted, as witnessed to Acts 7:51,

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumsised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost..."

The Holy Spirit is thus sorely despised by the unbelievers and they that blasphem Him, do so with terrible consequence, for God's Word is clear in Mark 3:29"...But he that shall blasphem against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."

Furthermore, the Holy Scriptures actually call Him God. In Acts 5:1-4 we read,

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied to men, but unto God."

And Scripture ascribes the attributes of God to the Holy Spirit. In Hebrews 9:14 He is described as "eternal". In Ps. 139:7-10, His omnipresence is praised. In Luke 1:35 His omnipotence is made known, and in John 14:26, 16:12-13, Jesus tells His disciples of the Holy Spirit's omniscience.

The Holy Spirit creates saving faith within the heart and gives to the mind of man understanding. As we read the words of St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 12, verse 3,

"Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

All who hold fast to Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin, death, and eternal damnation have been brought to such faith and conviction at the foot of the cross of Christ by the Holy Spirit through His Word.

It is the Holy Spirit which enables us to truly repent of our sins. It is He who gives us the strength in times of sore distress to say with the father of the possessed child in Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe,; help Thou mine unbelief."

And it is the Holy Spirit, who throughout the Bible, assures us of the forgiveness of all our sins, the true peace we have with God and the sure promise of everlasting life which we have through faith in Christ Jesus.

Dear ones, rejoice in the Holy Spirit, who leads you to Jesus, your Savior!

And again, I say rejoice! For the Holy spirit not only leads you to your salvation, but it is He also who keeps you in the communion of saints and continues to preserve His Church Universal through the preaching of His Holy Word.

As Christians, we are daily confronted by many things which seek to divert our attention from the Cross of Christ and so would turn us from Him and a life of sanctification.

The world, with all its vaunted fame and glory, and the desperate pursuit of material wealth tries to gain the upper hand in our lives by demanding our time and talents away from that which should be first and foremost in our lives, the spreading of the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ.

Our own sinful flesh, with all its lust, encourages us to follow the ways of the world.

And the Devil, as a roaring lion, is always there in one form or another to create doubt in the mind, a curse for the lips, and fear in the heart, so that he might devour us and so turn us from the Path of Light and Life.

Dear Christians, when an athlete prepares for a race, he prepares to win. He knows if he wants to succeed, if he wants his body to be able fight off stress, infection, disease, and any other thing which will interfere with a faithful run, he has to give his body the proper nutrition, He has to give it good food and clean water.

So what does he do?

Does he go out into a back alley somewhere, jump head long into a dumpster full of trash and start shoving handfuls of rotting, maggot infested garbage into his mouth?

No, that would be disgusting and foolish, wouldn't it?

Yet at times aren't we guilty of doing exactly that with our spiritual lives?

How many of us, at work or at other places in our communities, turn an eager ear to hear the latest gossip about somebody's infidelity, laugh at an off-color joke, or take joy in spreading the news about our neighbor's misfortune.

Do we allow ourselves to become engaged in reading material, or listening to songs, or watching television shows or movies we know are not God-pleasing?

Dear friends, such things ought not so to be!

In all times of trial and temptation, it would behoove us to remember that the Holy Spirit is also always there to strengthen us in the face of all temptations of the world, the devil and our own flesh; and to preserve and comfort us through all the trials of life, no matter what they might be, till our Savior comes to take us to our heavenly home.

He has promised us as much in Phillipians 1:6,

"...He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ..."

But Dear Ones, your faith can only be established and strengthened by the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace, reading and hearing of God's Word and in receiving the Sacraments.

And as an faithful athlete eats a steady diet of only good food and drink, so too, we need to be fed with the good spiritual food and waters found only in the Word of God.

Let us take full advantage of what we have been given!
God's Word is the good spiritual food we all daily need to prepare ourselves for the race we must run as children of God in a sinful world.

Therewith daily nourished and prepared, we will be able to withstand the temptations of the devil, the world, and our own flesh.

And if we will but turn to Him and His Word in our daily battle against the devil, the world, and our flesh, we shall be renewed in our faith and we shall not be overcome by the temptation to sin.

For by His Word He teaches us to use the Shield of Faith and how to wield the Sword of the Spirit, His Holy Word. Therewith the Holy Spirit leads us in the good fight of faith and by the knowledge that the race is won, the victory ours already in Christ, He gives us the willingness to endure all things faithfully to the end, which is a crown of eternal life.

Yes, Dear Ones, Rejoice in the Holy Spirit, for He has led us to our Savior, Jesus Christ, and rejoice in the Holy Spirit for He guards us and protects us and keeps us in the true faith, the communion of saints by His Word!

Let us also serve Him by sharing the reason for our rejoicing with others and so bring others into the same communion with us, as the Holy Spirit opens your ears to the great commission:

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

And as He lifts up your eyes to see the great harvest of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 9: 37-38,

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

It is He, God the Holy Spirit, who loosens your tongue to witness to others about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that they too might share in the joy and peace which can be found only in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Holy Spirit, grant us the willingness, courage and ability to speak to others about Jesus. In His name we ask this. Amen.

And now, may the peace of God, the Love of Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Ascended Lord and King. Amen.