

# Introduction

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Welcome to St. Peter's Lutheran Church Estevan. Pastor Kleemola here to bring you a partial service for the Day of Pentecost – May 31, 2020.

## Readings for the Day of Pentecost

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Old Testament Reading: Numbers 11:24-30

Psalm: Psalm 25:1-15

Epistle: Acts 2:1-21

Gospel: John 7:37-39

## Text for today's Sermon is taken from Acts 2:1-21

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<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost arrived; they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup>And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, <sup>11</sup>both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." <sup>12</sup>And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup>But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

<sup>14</sup>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 to you, and give ear to my words. <sup>15</sup>For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup>But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup>“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; <sup>18</sup>even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup>And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; <sup>20</sup>the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

<sup>21</sup>And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

## Sermon – Transformed

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Dear friends in Christ Jesus; No matter how often we read the Bible... no matter how familiar we are with its message; it always has something new to teach us. I know that when I read the Scriptures, it often has new things to teach me.

One of the things that many people do not know is that, although this Pentecost that we commemorate today was very special, it was not the first Pentecost. The Lord instituted Pentecost about the same time He instituted Passover. Pentecost was originally called the Feast of Weeks. Since the *Feast of Weeks* comes fifty days after the *Feast of Firstfruits*, people began calling it *Pentecost* based on the Greek word for fifty. Pentecost and the Feast of Weeks are the same festival, and so the Jews have celebrated Pentecost ever since the days of Moses.

Pentecost is also one of the three feast days that required the presence all the adult men of Israel. The Law of Moses said, **“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths.”** (Deut 16:16) The *Feast of Unleavened Bread* is one week long and begins the day after the Passover. The *Feast of Firstfruits* is included in that week, celebrated on the first Sunday in the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*. The *Feast of Weeks* or *Pentecost* comes fifty days after that, and the *Feast of Booths* is about six months after the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*.

Now, if we overlay these Festivals over the life of Christ, we learn that Jesus died on *Passover*, and He rose from the dead on the *Feast of Firstfruits*. Then, the Holy Spirit manifested Himself in a special way fifty days later, at *Pentecost*. The faithful Israelites who followed the instructions God gave to Moses would be in Jerusalem on those special days. This means that

the faithful who presented themselves in Jerusalem according to the instructions given in the Law were witnesses in Jerusalem for the crucifixion and resurrection as well as for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the following Pentecost. In this way, the Holy Spirit gathered His Old Testament Church together to hear about *the mighty works of God*. (Acts 2:11) God, the master strategist, had this all worked out thousands of years before it happened.

This brings us to something else that didn't occur to me for a long time. As I was growing up in the church, I always enjoyed hearing about the Holy Spirit poured out on the Apostles on Pentecost. How wonderful of God to give them the Holy Spirit in this way.

But then I discovered another giving of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. It happened on the day that Jesus rose from the dead. **On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."** (Jn 20:19–23) Did you hear it? Jesus already gave the Holy Spirit on the day of the Resurrection. He said, **"Receive the Holy Spirit."** I began to wonder, "If Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit on the day of the resurrection, why did the Holy Spirit have to come again on Pentecost?" Didn't Jesus get it right the first time?

But I must have been suffering from a mental block. I had gotten so distracted by the wow factor of the *sound like a mighty rushing wind, the divided tongues as of fire, and the apostles speaking in other languages*, that I didn't notice the major miracle of Pentecost. This miracle showed up in the response of those who gathered on that day. They came together. They heard the mighty works of God. Then they responded. **Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.** (Acts 2:37–41) *There* is the

great miracle of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit added three thousand souls to His church on that day. Pentecost is not about the Holy Spirit poured out on the Apostles. It is about the Holy Spirit poured out on those three thousand souls.

In His explanation to the third Article of the Apostles' Creed, Martin Luther wrote that the Holy Spirit *calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.* The Holy Spirit's manifestation on Pentecost is an example of that. 1500 years earlier, the Holy Spirit worked through His servant Moses to establish feasts that would gather these witnesses from the Old Testament Church to Jerusalem so that Luke the Evangelist could write, **“Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.”** (Acts 2:5) It was not an accident that these men were in Jerusalem on this day. The Holy Spirit had called together the Old Testament Church to tell them that the long-awaited Messiah had come in the person of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit was getting ready to convert the faithful of the Old Testament Church into the faithful of the New Testament Church.

That is the reason for the supernatural signs described in today's reading. The Holy Spirit was gathering His church together so that they could hear the call of the Gospel. As the people of the Old Testament church drew near to the house, they encountered people who told them who Jesus was and what He had done for their salvation. These people did not speak in the lofty language of the Hebrew of the temple, nor did they speak in the street language of Aramaic, or the commercial language of Greek, or even the legal language of Latin, but each one heard the story of salvation in his own native language... the language he learned from his mother and father in the home of his childhood. Each one heard in his own language *the mighty works of God.* (Acts 2:11)

All these amazing things were the Holy Spirit's means to accomplish the goal of gathering together His OT Church and telling her that her waiting was over... that the NT had begun. The Pentecost Pilgrims and other righteous people who gathered together on that day had been looking forward to the Messiah. They had been keeping the ceremonial law of the circumcisions and the sacrifices and all the other customs as a reminder that one day Messiah would come and fulfill all the law and offer Himself up as the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. Their faith looked into the future to the Messiah who was to come. Now the Holy Spirit gathered the church together to tell all the faithful that the Messiah *had come* in the person of Jesus of

Nazareth. He is the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one. On this one particular Pentecost, the Holy Spirit called together the OT church and transformed it into the NT church.

Amid all the amazing things that happened on that Pentecost, it is easy to confuse God's goal with the means that He used to accomplish that goal. After all, this is exciting stuff... a sound like a mighty wind... the appearance of what looks like flames of fire... the sudden ability to speak and understand a foreign language. It is easy to get distracted by all these things and forget the main goal... the goal of creating faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. That was the goal of the Holy Spirit on that Pentecost long ago, and it is still His goal today.

Amid the signs and wonders of that special Pentecost, there were still those who resisted. There were men in the crowd who mocked and said, **"They are filled with new wine."** (Acts 2:13) In any crowd there will always be those who resist the call of the Gospel.

This can be a great comfort to us as we confess our faith to the people we meet in our lives. Sometimes, they will be interested and want to know more. Other times they will reject our confession. When that rejection comes, we can take comfort in knowing that even when there was the *sound like a rushing wind, the divided tongues as of fire, and the apostles speaking in other languages*, that there were some people who resisted their message. We should expect that and continue to confess our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

On the day *after* that special Pentecost, there was no sound of a mighty wind. The tongues of fire had gone away. People spoke simply in their own language. Never-the-less, the Holy Spirit was still at work. The story goes on after today's Second Reading and says, **"The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.** (Acts 2:47) God's Church still had His Word and the Holy Spirit continued to work through that Word.

The Holy Spirit still works through the Word of God today. It has always been that way and it will always be that way. The true sign of the Holy Spirit at work is the proclamation of God's Word. The Holy Spirit points to Jesus who is the God-Man who saved us from our sin with His suffering and death on the cross and promises us life everlasting with His resurrection. The Holy Spirit works through God's Word when we hear it with our ears... when we read it with our eyes... when we experience that Word in the water of Holy Baptism... and when we receive it in our mouths with the true body and blood of Jesus in the Bread and Wine of the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit is at work when we confess our faith before each other and when we confess our faith before those who do not know Jesus.

In today's Second Reading, the Holy Spirit used light and sound to call the Church to hear the proclamation that the Messiah they had been waiting for had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Spirit transformed the OT church into the NT church and the Holy Spirit continues building the NT Church to this very day. The Holy Spirit still calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies, and keeps us in the true faith. As He gives each of us new birth into the Holy Christian church so He also calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies that whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it in the one, true faith. *In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day, He will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.* Amen.

## Prayer of the Church

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Almighty God, You have blessed us in love with the Saviour to whom the nations cry and in whom is forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Grant to us Your Holy Spirit, the Comforter whom You have promised, that we and all who call upon His name shall be saved. Help us to treasure in our hearts Your mercy and to give ourselves fully to Your service.

Almighty God, You delivered Your Word through Moses and the prophets and fulfilled Your Word in Christ. He was planted in death for our sins and raised for our justification, and in Him shall all the nations of the earth be united. Give us pastors who will preach this Word faithfully and church workers who are devoted to Your service.

Almighty God, You have promised the thirsty will drink and from the empty will flow forth rivers of living water. Help us to show forth in holy lives the fruits of the Spirit and to live with love toward our neighbour. Give us a servant's heart that doesn't seek our own way but walks on the path of eternal life.

Almighty God, You have promised to make one people from the many. Take from us all pride, prejudice and hate, that we may not hinder the cause of the Gospel by our shame but give welcome to all people in the name of Christ.

Almighty God, You have ordered all things in heaven and on earth. Bless Justin Trudeau, our Prime Minister; Scott Moe, our Premier; the Parliament of Canada; and all elected and appointed civil servants, that the rule of law may protect the weak, preserve life from conception to its natural end, and peace may reign for the benefit of all.

Almighty God, have mercy and spare us. Put an end to the pandemic, and restore the communities of the world to their common life. Speed the work of those developing vaccines or treatments and move people to act responsibly to limit the spread.

Almighty God, You breath hope into the weary and renew Your Church by Your grace. Bless newly planted congregations that they may endure, guide established congregations that they may not lose heart, and build up our Synod that our zeal for Your Kingdom may not flag but flourish and prosper according to Your will.

Almighty God, You carry the burdens of our lives in Your hands. Deliver from illness and suffering all who cry to You for release. Hear us on behalf of the sick, the dying and those who mourn especially Pattie Berday, Meriam Koch, Gerald Olson, and Wanda Stang. Answer Your people, O Lord, and deliver them from their infirmities and their grief by Your grace.

Almighty God, Your Word endures forever. Give us grace so that we may be united in doctrine and in the fellowship of Your table, confessing Christ boldly and living together in faith and love until our Lord returns in His glory to bring all things to their appointed completion when we will dwell in His house forever.

Almighty God, hear Your people for the sake of Him who loved us even to death and who lives to call to Himself all who will be saved. You know what we need and those things we should ask in Your name. Grant them to us for the sake of our crucified, risen and ascended Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## Benediction

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The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.