

The Spirit Is Yours!

A Sermon on Acts 2:21

Year C - Pentecost

15 - May - 2016

JJ¹

Today is the Festival of Pentecost. You might be surprised to hear me say this, but Pentecost is just as important as Christmas and Easter. Christmas celebrates our Lord's birth and Easter his glorious resurrection from the dead after suffering for our sin. But Pentecost? Yes, Pentecost. Without Pentecost, you and I wouldn't be here today. You see, you could call Pentecost the birthday of the New Testament Church. Pentecost marked the change from God primarily bring his Word to the people of Israel and now bringing it to the world. God's task with Israel as a nation was done. Now Israel's purpose was no different from any other nation. Now God the Holy Spirit would be sending out the Gospel to all nations in all languages, through the likes of you and me! And it started in Jerusalem with common men who loved their Lord.

For ten days the disciples waited in Jerusalem after Jesus ascended into heaven. They stayed in Jerusalem even though it was dangerous for them to do so because Jesus had promised "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

We're told that they went outside and spoke to all the people gathered in Jerusalem from all kinds of places throughout the Roman Empire. Each person hearing God's Word spoken in their own language. Instead of recognizing that God was pouring out a beautiful gift on his people that day, some tried to discredit the truth of God's Word by accusing them of being drunk. Peter speaks for the group and begins his great Pentecost sermon. Peter starts by assuring the people that they are not drunk, but that this was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

The New Testament era had officially begun. It was the beginning of the end as the world now moved into the Last Days. The Lord speaks through Joel of many wonderful gifts he would pour out on his people. But the greatest gift is the one found at the end of our text today: “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Yes, tongues, prophecies, visions and dreams are beautiful gifts, but they don't even begin to compare to the greatest gift of them all—faith. The gift of faith is shocking when you think about it. From a human perspective, every other gift is easy for God to give. They're all given to hearts that already believe. But to give faith God must conquer and crush our sinful hearts. That anyone would be given the gift to be able to call on the name of the Lord and be saved is amazing.

By faith, we confess the painful truth with King David: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51:5). By faith, we acknowledge with the Apostle Paul that

“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). By faith, we see how deeply this sin not only infects us, but all people and that by nature “[we] were dead in [our] transgressions and sins,” and left to ourselves we would only seek to satisfy “the cravings of our sinful nature and [follow] its desires and thoughts” (Eph. 2:1,3).

Finally, by faith you know the terrible tragedy to which all these truths lead. “The one who sins is the one who will die” (Ezek. 18:20). And you know this death is threefold—it is spiritual, physical and eternal. You know that by nature you cannot call on God's name and be saved, but only hate and curse his name.



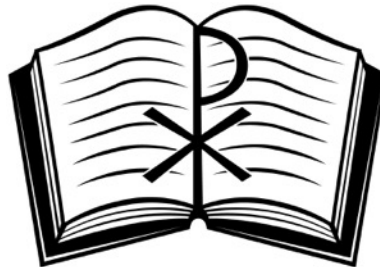
And that's why God the Holy Spirit stepped into your lives personally when you were baptized. In faith and love your parents brought you into God's house. They brought you to the front of church where the pastor did something that looks silly and insignificant, even cultish, to the unbelieving world. As simple water was sprinkled on your head, the Name on which you call was proclaimed over you. The name of our Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It was then that God the Holy Spirit did the impossible and made his home in your hearts! It was then that he made the blessings of the Son's sacrifice your very own. The Holy Spirit rescued you from the great danger of unbelief, the power of

the devil and even hell itself! **THE SPIRIT IS YOURS!** He is your companion through this life. He leads you to Christ your Savior and builds you up in your faith every time you hear his Word.

The day you were baptized the Holy Spirit was poured out into your hearts to give you all the spiritual gifts that you have, each one uniquely given to make you, you. Each one given that you would use those gifts to praise God and give him thanks by serving him in all that you do.

But as I've said, the greatest spiritual gift he has given you is your faith. That gift of faith which we sometimes describe as a new organ the Lord has given us, one that allows us to hold on to the promises of God and call upon Christ as our Savior.



Friends, be thankful that though the outward signs of wind, tongues of fire and miraculous speaking in languages have not been repeated, the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost has never ceased. You are proof of that today because **THE SPIRIT IS YOURS!** The proof is found as you daily turn to your baptism and find the strength and desire to drown your sinful nature through repen-

tance. The proof is found as the Spirit continues to speak to our hearts through the unchanging Word of God. The proof is found every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper and believe Jesus' words, "This is my body, given for you...This is my blood, shed for you," so that we can leave God's house with peace in our hearts. The proof is found in the fact that the Holy Spirit continues to take up residence in new hearts every day.

Friends, the Holy Spirit has been given to you to assure you that God's promises are true and are never to be doubted. Especially the promise that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Friends, rejoice that **THE SPIRIT IS YOURS!** Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

