

## ***“The Great Day of Pentecost”***

We have come to one of the great Feasts of the Church Year – The Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was not something new for the Christians in the early church – it has its roots in the Old Testament – celebrated every year by God’s people since God instituted it at Mt. Sinai.

However, at this Pentecost recorded for us in Acts 2, the people of God saw and heard things that had never happened on Pentecost before. But don’t be misled – this is not some contemporary adaptation designed to make Pentecost more relevant for the people of God – rather, it is God bringing His Pentecost to fulfillment.

The Feast of Pentecost was rooted in the harvest of the crops – a feast that celebrated the firstfruits of the harvest. The annual harvest was a part of their lives – and God uses this very common part of their lives – to point them in faith to the Day when the Lord would gather a harvest of souls for His kingdom.

Every year they celebrated the Feast of Pentecost – but now, the crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ brings it all to a head. The people of God are gathered together – “And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting.”

The Old Testament word for “Spirit” is *ruach* – which is also used for “wind” or “breath.” When Ezekiel stood looking out over the valley of dry bones – the Lord tells him to preach to the dead, dry bones. And as he preaches – a wind, a *ruach* (the Holy Spirit) – sweeps through the valley of death and brings the congregation of Israel to life.

When the resurrected Jesus appears to His disciples locked behind doors on Easter evening – He “breathes” on His disciples and says – “Receive the Holy Spirit ...” And now, here at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit rushes into this house like a mighty rushing wind.

But that’s not all. “And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.”

Remember how the Lord appeared to Moses at the burning bush – revealing His presence by means of fire that did not consume the bush? Remember how the Lord led His people through the wilderness by means of a pillar of cloud by day, and a “pillar of fire” by night? So now these “tongues as of fire” reveal that God is present here, and that the Holy Spirit is at work in the preaching of God’s Word.

“And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Pentecostal Christians take this “speaking in other tongues” and try to make it into something that the Lord has not given. For them, “speaking in tongues” is some kind of ecstatic gibberish that shows the person is a believer – that they have the Holy Spirit. For them it is all about the certainty of salvation for the one speaking in tongues.

Some other Christians have another kind of speaking in tongues – where they take the biblical Word of God and try to make it relevant – trying to “speak the language of the people” – which very often is a watered down version of God’s Word.

In their efforts to speak to the people – God’s Word is manipulated so as not to offend, or to become an obstacle to the hearer. The Word of God is preached in such a way as to appeal to the wants and the desires of the listener.

But what does the Bible say? What is this speaking “in other tongues”? Why is the Holy Spirit poured out on the Church in this way? The text is quite clear. First of all, all of this is from the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who “gave them utterance” – that is, enabled them to speak in “other tongues.”

Gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost are people “from every nation under heaven” – and they were able to hear the Apostles preaching to them in their “own language.” This is not some ecstatic gibberish – this is speaking in another language – a language that is foreign to the speaker, but known to the hearer!

The Holy Spirit enables the Apostles to preach in the language of the Parthians and folks from Mesopotamia and Phrygia and Pamphylia and Rome, and all the others – so that all the world might hear in their “own language ... the mighty works of God.”

Of course, you know that the world doesn't have much use for the preaching of God's Word. The world mocks God, and despises His Word. The crowds mocked the Apostles as a bunch of drunks. Today, the preachers and hearers of God's Word are mocked as simpletons, naïve, bible-thumping and gun-toting hicks!

But Peter preaches anyway – proclaiming to all with ears to hear, “the mighty works of God.” The Day of the Lord prophesied by Joel has come! The vivid imagery of Good Friday reveals that the Kingdom of God has come upon the earth – in the flesh of this man Jesus – crucified and raised to life again.

Now, in these last days, after Christ has ascended, He pours out the Holy Spirit “on all flesh” – so that all might receive the mighty works of Jesus for their salvation – so that the Holy Spirit might blow into the ears of all flesh, “that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Dearly beloved, that is why the Lord has gathered you here today – on this Feast of Pentecost – to pour out the Holy Spirit on you – to harvest into His kingdom all who call upon the name of the Lord in faith.

The *ruach* of the Holy Spirit blows – not just on Pentecost – but whenever you hear God's Word. The Holy Spirit is the Lord and giver of life – and He gives life to you by pouring out Calvary-won-forgiveness on you. That is the “mighty work of God” for you – the forgiveness of all your sin – for your eternal salvation.

Dearly beloved, that is the peace that the Lord gives, and leaves, with you, through the working of the Holy Spirit by the Gospel. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.