

“The Holy Spirit at Work”

It's the Day of Pentecost, and the crowds are “bewildered ... amazed and astonished ... amazed and perplexed.” Why is that? What's going on?

Well, there are some amazing signs! “And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.”

A mighty sound gets their attention – a sound like “a mighty rushing wind.” In the Hebrew, the word for wind (*ruach*) can also mean breath, or spirit.

Then there are the tongues of fire – an amazing sight indeed! Like illuminating flames, these tongues of fire indicate that the Holy Spirit is with this one – the one on whom the tongue of fire rests. They were audible and visible signs to show that God the Holy Spirit is at work through these apostles.

“Bewildered ... amazed and astonished ... amazed and perplexed” --- not because of the signs – but, “because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.” “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?”

The twelve apostles speaking in foreign languages attracted the attention of the crowds – it astonished them – but it wasn't the main attraction! A sign attracts attention – not for the sake of the sign – but rather, for what it signifies! That red, octagonal sign is not put there alongside the road for you to marvel at – but it signifies that you are supposed to STOP.

God the Holy Spirit enabled these Galilean men to speak in languages they did not know and had not learned. Yes, there was a WOW factor here – not to draw attention to those who were speaking – but rather, so that all who HEAR them might benefit from what they say.

Some charismatic Christians believe that this speaking in “other tongues” is an ecstatic-type speaking – a sign that the Holy Spirit is with that person speaking gibberish.

Notice, the purpose of their “speaking in tongues” is for the benefit of the SPEAKER – but here in the Scriptures (where it is clear that they are speaking in known, though foreign, languages), it is for the benefit of the HEARER!

Like some in the crowd that day – a misreading, or a misuse, of the sign – leads to harmful results. “Others mocking, said, ‘They are filled with new wine’” (in other words, “These guys are drunk!”). And notice what they do. They mock these men. They mock the “sent ones” of Christ. They mock God the Holy Spirit.

So, what is going on here? What’s this all about? Peter tells us. What Joel said would happen in “the last days” is what is happening here in our text. In the days between Jesus’ ascension into heaven – and His return on the Last Day – God promises, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.”

That’s what is happening – not in the sound of a mighty wind, or the tongues of fire – but in the preaching of God’s Word! Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus told His apostles: “Behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (St. Luke 24:29).

In Acts 1, Jesus says to them: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (v. 8). In Matthew’s Gospel He says: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:19-20). In Titus 3, the Apostle Paul speaks of the “washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom [God] poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (vss. 5-6). The Holy Spirit is being poured out on “all flesh” as Joel prophesied – on Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, and so forth.

God’s Word is preached, and the Holy Spirit is poured out on sons and daughters, young men and old men, male servants and female servants. The Holy Spirit is poured out on them, and they speak God’s Word, and “EVERYONE who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

In the OT, the Feast of Pentecost was a harvest celebration – not just of grains – but the harvest of souls that would take place when the Messiah came. On Pentecost Day, Peter preached “the mighty works of God” – and, “those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

And so it is on this Pentecost Day, and every day that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed – that God the Holy Spirit is at work to call people to faith, gather them into the Church, enlighten them with His gifts, and sanctify and keep them in the one true, and saving, faith.

Preaching and baptizing and Lord’s Supper go on today, because the Holy Spirit works through these means – not only informing people of “the mighty works of God” – but actually DOING the mighty works of God.

The Holy Spirit is at work, turning hearers from unbelief to faith – washing, regenerating and resurrecting those who are dead in their trespasses and sins – nourishing them with the Bread from Heaven.

Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit leads you in faith to Christ your Savior – who poured out His blood on Calvary to redeem the sins of the whole world – and now, covers you with His blood, blotting out all your transgressions, redeeming you, and reconciling you to your Father in heaven.

This preaching and these sacraments are not mere signs – they are God at work, harvesting souls and gathering them into His kingdom – God at work, saving you, and “everyone” who calls on the name of the Lord.

O give thanks unto the Lord – who by the working of the Holy Spirit through the Word – gathers His harvest in these “last days.” Amen.

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