

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Happy Pentecost! While focusing on the spectacular event recorded in the second chapter of Acts, nevertheless the day of Pentecost is really about Jesus. Now that Jesus is glorified, the Spirit is given without limit. Now that Jesus has been glorified by His death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven, NOW is when things really start happening in magnificent new ways. The Holy Spirit is given without limit. After Jesus Christ has been glorified and raised, it is like a dam has broken open.

The Spirit is poured out in dramatic new ways. The apostles speak in many different languages. Now the work of the Holy Spirit goes anywhere to anyone. As Pat read in the lesson from Acts: “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Cretins and Arabs...” they all hear the good news of Jesus Christ preached to them by these Galilean apostles who were formerly simple fishermen and tradesmen. A miracle has happened and the whole point of the miracle was to proclaim the great, miraculous news of Jesus’ death and resurrection to all of these faithful Jews who had gathered for Pentecost (the Jewish festival of booths, which was always held 50 days after the Passover). We often see Pentecost as a unique holiday unto itself. Especially this year, I’d prefer to see Pentecost as the final Sunday of Easter. Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! ALLELUIA!!

The members of this vast audience of these faithful Jews of the diaspora, after hearing the good news of Jesus Christ, go off into their own lands and spread the gospel. Wherever in the world the word of God is preached, in whatever language, the Holy Spirit is at work. The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to point people to Jesus. Sure, blowing the doors open, making tongues of fire rest on the disciples – all of that grand spectacle was cool, gnarly, Cecil B. Demill stuff! But, as Peter’s sermon points out, preaching Christ, and him crucified, is the main point of it all. Pentecost is the day when Christ’s promise to clothe the apostles with “power from on high” is fulfilled and it is done in a marvelous and most unexpected way. The Holy Spirit is always working to bring people to faith. Anyone, anywhere, anytime, anyplace, any situation. Pentecost is about the unlimited giving of the Holy Spirit that could not happen until the message of Christ had been accomplished and clarified. Now that Jesus has been glorified, now the message goes out without limits and every single one of us is an active participant in that.

And, let’s remember the Holy Spirit, just like the Father and the Son, has been at work from the very beginning. Of course, we remember God’s Spirit hovered over the waters at creation. In the chapter 11 of the book of Numbers, we hear the following: “So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again. Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” And Joshua

son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, “My lord Moses, stop them!” But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!” And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.” (Numbers 11:24–30, NRSV)

Eldad and Medad, although they missed gathering with the rest of the faithful in the tent with Moses, God’s Spirit spilled out of the tent to them. Just when the folks who were with Moses in the tent were upset that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp, Moses responded to those who were upset, “Don’t be jealous for my sake – would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!” God’s spirit had been localized on Moses and it begins to get distributed in the community – “they all began to prophesy. God’s spirit is not limited by us. That’s a consistent part of the story. On Pentecost, we celebrate that God has done just that! All of us get to proclaim that “Christ is risen – HE IS RISEN, INDEED!” and he died to forgive our sins. And all who call on the name of the Lord in repentance will be forgiven their sins and saved!

In our Psalm for today, especially verse 30 of Psalm 104, the psalmist says, “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth.” Dear Lord, that is certainly our prayer as we look at our world today. In the midst of the anxiety everyone around the world has over COVID-19, we have the added meaningless death of George Floyd and all of the protest and violence that has since accompanied it. I attended a prayer meeting out in the courtyard of New Hope Lutheran Church near the Dayton View Triangle, my in-laws’ neighborhood yesterday. We were all spread out in our face masks. Scripture and prayers for peace were shared among our small, racially diverse group of 17. Wherever God’s faithful are either just starting to gather in their church buildings like we are today, or gathering virtually over the internet, let this be the prayer we all share. “Lord, send forth your Spirit, renew the face of the earth!”

About the speaking in different languages in our Acts passage, notice it is different language and not what is often referred to as “speaking in tongues,” otherwise known by the technical term, “glossolalia.” That is the special “speaking with the tongues of angels” Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

Remember, many in the crowd scoff at the apostles, assuming they’re drunk even though it’s only 9 o’clock in the morning. This can make us humbly ask, do we explore more deeply what the gospel means? What does it mean that “All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” ALL – everyone. We’re talking old and young, slaves and free. Men and women. Universality. Not just the ones we designate as acceptable. The ones outside the tent. Not just the ones who get it today or who get it the first time it is offered. There is time for this to spread. The Spirit is on the move. Pastor Delmer Chilton, a guy whose insights (along with those of his colleague, Pastor John Fairless) help me prepare my sermons made this additional observation. We have always tended to see Pentecost as the birthday of the Church. Perhaps we should look at it a different way. Delmer Chilton prefers to see Pentecost as, rather, the

confirmation of the Church. Remember, after Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah – the Christ – the Son of the living God, Jesus then says it is upon the solid rock of Peter’s testimony that Christ will build His Church.

The apostles have seen Jesus ascend and now they go back, and they wait, and they pray and they are ready. Then the Holy Spirit comes upon them. And they are ready to go forth. It is not a sudden transition. Jesus prepares them to go forth. The Spirit is a part of God’s plan (or personality) from the very beginning. You cannot divide all this out and say, “There’s a God of the Old Testament – the Creator and the there’s Jesus who comes and shows us in a human form what God is like.” No – it’s all one. I am sure Bishop Eaton, Presiding Bishop of our ELCA, will be sharing more about this next Sunday – Holy Trinity Sunday, in the sermon she is going to be providing for us.

Today, Pentecost, we remember that the Spirit of God is part of what’s happening all along. We see these Jews of the diaspora – the dispersion from Jerusalem to various countries throughout the world – living in the various tongue-twister countries mentioned in our Acts lesson. This is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to His disciples of the Advocate He would send. This Spirit breaks down barriers, and opens locked doors. Dear Lord, if there was ever a time we’ve needed you to do just that, it is now. They had gathered in that space, the Spirit came into that space and they thought they had it under control, but it leaked out into the camp on Eldad and Medad in that passage from Numbers I shared earlier. In our Acts passage, the apostles are gathered in this room where they’ve met Jesus and where Jesus has come to them before. The Spirit doesn’t only leak out of that room, it throws the disciples out of that room, into the public and breaks down those barriers. Breaks down the language barriers. The Spirit is on the move throughout Scripture. In Revelation, we hear, “The Spirit and the bride say, come.”

So – in closing, I present 5 parallels Jesus gives the disciples in the upper room before His crucifixion in our gospel lesson today from the 20th chapter of John. We see them on the evening of that first Easter Sunday. The doors are locked for fear of the Jewish leaders. Jesus comes and stands among them and says, “Peace be with you.” In verse 19 there is fear and Jesus brings peace.

1. Where there is fear, Jesus brings peace.
2. Then, in verse 20 “after He said this Jesus showed them his hands and side and then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Where they thought there was death, Jesus brought life.
3. Verse 21 Jesus says again, “peace be with you and as the Father has sent me so I send you.” Where they did not know what they would do or what they were going to do, Jesus brought them purpose. He sends them. Where they had no direction, they became sent. Jesus gave them direction and a purpose.
4. In verse 22, “When He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “receive the Holy Spirit.” The disciples had been knocked back on their heels – knocked out of breath and Jesus breathed on them and re-inlivened them.

5. Lastly, they were just sitting in the room saying, what are we going to do now? Where they had no purpose, Jesus gave them their mission. Jesus said to them, “if you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” Basically, Jesus tells the apostles here, “It is your job to go out and preach the gospel of forgiveness. That is your purpose in life. So – to recap, Jesus comes and changes things
1. In place of fear, Jesus brings peace
 2. In place of death, Jesus brings life
 3. Jesus changes the disciples from being His lost students to being His sent apostles.
 4. Jesus changes the apostles from being out of breath and out of hope to being full of the Holy Spirit.
 5. And lastly – Jesus changes the apostles from having no purpose in life to being ready to go out and spread the Word!