

The Rock: 05-23-2021

Pentecost Sunday

First reading: None

Title: Pentecost Sunday

Scripture: Acts 2:1-13

Theme:

So much more than just people speaking in tongues, or other languages, happened that Pentecost Sunday some 2,000 years ago.

Introduction:

(Remember -You do not know how many people sitting here today even know about the baptism, or what it is, and its NON-craziness. Keep this in mind)

This morning is Pentecost Sunday. The celebration within the Church of the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on the 120 who gathered together that fateful day.

Pentecost itself is the second holiest holiday and celebration for the people of Israel, a time when the first sheaves of wheat from the first harvest were to be brought to the temple and given to the Lord.

Doing so as a sign of gratitude to God for His blessing and also as a prayer that the rest of the crop would be safely gathered and brought into its proper place.

Strange, and not really when you think about it. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when we look at the day God chose to do this, it seems is about so much more than just tongues. That's what we will look at as we look to learn what really happened and what it means to be baptized.

Just as an aside to keep in mind as we look at this Pentecost Sunday, the celebration of the first fruits of the harvest, let's remember what Jesus said when he saw his people as he journeyed during his ministry. It will help us: (Isaac's text from last week)

"And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray

earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

-Matthew 9:35-38 ESV

How true this is today, and why we need the power and anointing of His Holy Spirit. Not to be goofy, brag that we can speak in tongues, but rather so we can be empowered to help those who are lost, become found!

The Story:

I remember the first time I came here in 1986, February. I had no church background, no real interest or understanding of this thing called the Bible. At least that's what I thought. Not having grown up in the church can actually have its advantages.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating that sort of thing, but when it comes to things like Pentecost and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is far less muddled if you don't already have a map of how Sunday or Church or a spirit-filled life is to look.

Much like life itself, there is so much more to the story than just: "I've got the gift of tongues, and this is really weird." That alone is a true statement, that it's weird, but it's also not completely correct.

The gift of tongues is not the Baptism. But anyway, we'll get there. Back to my first experience -As I recall the first time I came here the church had an evangelist preaching and he was praying for this baptism for people.

Well, it worked, and it was weird. I recall asking my aunt to please take me away from here, as kindly as a freaked out unchurched 17-year-old could ask.

I thank God though that He would not let go of me, and the next week I believe, we came back and Pastor Roland was in the pulpit. Only two or three years into his ministry here, I came to know Jesus as savior and was baptized in the spirit myself.

Zero clue as to what happened to me, I guess its best if God is going to wreck your world, he might just as well do it all at once.

So, why do I share all of that? Because behind every story is what? A person, and sometimes that story has the table set for them in a certain way, most especially when it comes to this thing the Bible calls, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Bible has that story to tell. The only one that matters and the only one

that gives us the good framework for things like this, and the "why" this happened and still happens.

As usual, the story doesn't start on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 -What happened there is actually the conclusion of one story, and the launching of another.

It is the end of the reign of sins curse through Adam and the beginning of New Creation because of the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth- The Christ and savior of the world.

From the moment Adam and Eve blew it and were sent out of the garden- we see a death spiral in humanity. From Genesis 3 onto 11, with the exception of a few good men Enoch, Noah, Shem.

The rest of the world though was spiraling out of control away from God and into idolatry and selfishness. That's where the Tower of Babel comes in. A society and culture out of control and in no need of any God but themselves:

"Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." And the Lord came down to see the city and the

tower, which the children of man had built."

-Genesis 11:4-5 ESV

But what happened then is what happens even now, and it's this -our striving to make a society and names for ourselves, by becoming "masters of our own destinies". It never really works, does it?

Because God has a purpose for us and a way for us to live which guarantees genuine, healthy human flourishing. It is a way for us to live in this world that is so much better and much more fulfilling than we could ever think on our own.

So, God decided to put a stop to this little building project:

"And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord

confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.”

-Genesis 11:6-9 ESV

I believe that we need to understand all of that in order to really understand Acts 2 and the day of Pentecost.

Because once again these early believers, and non-believers who are about to have their world turned upside down, are all gathered in one place.

The day of Pentecost has arrived, that day of celebrating the first fruits of the harvest, and something different was about to happen -the beginning of the Church which would change the world, starting right there in Jerusalem:

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing 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. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

-Acts 2:1-4 ESV

I want us to understand that what is happening here is not the giving of the gift of tongues, hear me please, as we get into the series of the gifts in the fall, I will talk much more about this.

But what God has done here at the outset is as N.T. Wright put it:

God is giving to His redeemed people the way of life by which they must now carry out His purposes."

-NTE Pg. 21

This is something to remember as we learn about this. God doesn't give the Holy Spirit in this way to turn us into spiritual belly-button gazers, or those folks who go from one spiritual high and experience to another.

No, this is to empower us to witness about Jesus, and to live the full Christian life in this world which He has set us down. It ought to start at the personal, yes, but in that transforming of our hearts and minds, it should also drive us to a fullness found only in community.

Look again at verse one:

"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place."

-Acts 2:1 ESV

When we talk about unity of the body, His Church, that can only happen because of Pentecost and the outpouring of His Spirit.

He, the Holy Spirit is not an it, is the great unifier. The gift, the third person of the Trinity who by His coming reverses the curse of Genesis 11 and blows wide open the healing and uniting of the nation's again.

Look at verse 7 and on to verse 11:

"And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

-Acts 2:7-11 ESV

Genesis 11 confused their language, separated them off into tribes and fractured the "known world". What is happening here in Acts 2 is the launching

of New Creation, where that curse has been reversed and God is now, because of Jesus, healing the nations.

It is no accident that John sees this beautiful picture in his recording of that vision in Revelation:

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb..."

-Revelation 7:9a ESV

You see, without the Holy Spirit, without His power, there is no unity. There is no power to witness about Jesus and the New Creation life and the restoration of the nations.

Tongues, here in chapter two is the sign that this was of God. That is clear from verse 11. One again it wasn't misunderstood or in need of interpretation, but rather it was evidence that God had just done something and the world would never be the same:

"...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

-Acts 2:11b ESV

This outpouring brought glory to God FIRST -edification to the body of believers and salvation to the nations, second. **Tongues is not the goal, it's the gift. The goal is the power to witness in this world.**

It is the power to live and love in the unity of the Holy Spirit, so that God is glorified, His people are edified (built up together) and the world hears the message of the Gospel: In Power.

Just read the rest of chapter two and that powerful sermon given by, of all people, Peter. Look back at the Gospels and how Peter was throughout, and compare the two. Not the same person.

The same human being for sure, but certainly not the same person. Why? The in-filling and power of the Holy Spirit. Peter, now stands in front of the very people who ordered the death of Jesus and rebukes them.

Yes, this is the same dude who couldn't even admit he knew who Jesus was when a servant girl asked him. The power and purpose of Pentecost.

Just as an aside-an important one, because we all need to know this, as teaching on it at times can be unclear.

What Luke is NOT saying here is this:
"Without tongues as evidenced in your
life, you don't have the Holy Spirit.
That is NOT what he is saying.

If you are a Christian, a follower of
Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit. How do I
know? Because the Bible tells me so. The
moment you step into that relationship
with Him, His Holy Spirit comes and lives
inside of you.

Having recognized Jesus as the risen
LORD, the disciples see Him again, and
John records for us:

"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."

-John 20b-22 ESV

There are no tongues, no wind and in fact
Luke records in his Gospel that Jesus
told them to wait in Jerusalem for the
empowerment from Heaven.

So, it is clear that these are separate
and distinct events, and if you are saved
you have the promised Holy Spirit, even
if you don't speak in tongues.

The Baptism is for the empowerment to witness in this world. It is also for our daily in-filling so we can find contentment in our calling and our place in this world. Even if, like Paul in Philippians, we are persecuted and in prison.

The Holy Spirit enables us to live a joy-filled life. He is the great unifier, bringing all the nations, peoples, tribes and tongues back together to celebrate what Jesus did for us.

This is to be seen in how the local church community lives in this world, how she is focused and on what she is focused. How it is we live out this Christian life and fulfill our promises to one another and to those around us.

He is seen in how unified we are around the gospel things and not the political things, around community and human flourishing, and not in dividing according to socio-economic, ethnicity, gender, and all the things that are tearing us apart.

Genuine human flourishing is concerned with the wholesale demand for abortion for any reason, for the disposal of older people because they have "aged out". Stick them in a home somewhere.

It cares about the danger and abuse of children at our border-regardless of where they are from. Why? Because God cares about human beings. It cares when we confuse feelings with biology, and think we can change who God made us.

The church should always be the loudest when the gospel is violated in these ways. When God's image bearers are abused and confused. That is kingdom politics.

I have never been so concerned and dismayed at how the Church, which is made for just such a time as this, is so divided over non-gospel things here in our beautiful country.

Our King is Jesus, our politics are Kingdom politics, and our mission field is this world. Genuine human flourishing, fullness and the glory of our Father in Heaven is the goal.

Pentecost Sunday is the seal on these things. God, because of Jesus's death, resurrection and ascension, sent His Holy Spirit to empower us to go into all the world.

He empowered us to be a unified local community of believers serving one another -Again, we will talk about that starting July 4.

All these things are a part of being a powerful witness of the gospel. This makes us New Creation people -living in this world in a way that declares our belief in the victory of Jesus over death and the devil.

That we are no longer bound to the curse of Adam, but have been freed and empowered to live full human lives as united believers.

The church is made for moments just like this!! Let's not blow it by fighting and dividing over things we shouldn't.

Instead, let's seek the empowerment, the baptism of His Holy Spirit that gives that daily in-filling to glorify Him by living lives that shine.