

Acts 2:1-21

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." 14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 " '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. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Prayer of the Day:

Holy Spirit, God and Lord, come to us this joyful day with your sevenfold gifts of grace. Rekindle in our hearts the holy fire of your love that in a true and living faith we may tell abroad the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Father, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia. (From the antiphon: *Come, Holy Spirit*)

Sermon Text:

Let's get to work! I think that statement probably has taken on a slightly different meaning these days than it once had. I have to admit that I like seeing faces looking back at me while I'm preaching. My cellphone never really reacted much. However, before quarantines or safer – at – homes that phrase didn't necessarily mean you hadn't been active previously it was just time for another level. The sports team heading out for the game they had meticulously practiced for might say, Let's get to work! The construction crew plans in hand and materials assembled might say the same when it finally became time to erect the building. And so it is on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been working throughout the entire history of humanity, but it is on this day, perhaps more than any other that we see the Spirit do His thing. Yes, **THE HOLY SPIRIT GOES TO WORK POWERFULLY AT PENTECOST!**

I think there are some similarities between those gathered together in our first verse and many today. 50 days have passed since that first Easter morning. No doubt the followers of Jesus are slowly coming out of the fog that engulfed them after the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. I don't know if the fear that had once gripped all of them still held them behind locked doors for fear of the Jews but I would imagine that they still had at least a little tendency to look over their shoulders as they moved around. Certainly, Jesus had told them "*Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about*" (Acts 1:4).

Now it was the Festival of Weeks. One of three pilgrimage festivals, Israelites from the far-flung corners of their day were gathered again in Jerusalem. We might say, the planning had been done, all the parts and pieces had been assembled, and now it was time, time for the Holy Spirit to go to work! So to a house full of Jesus' followers the Spirit comes. *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.*

Now usually in confirmation class as we discuss the working of the Holy Spirit we talk about a camera man quietly working behind the scenes. The job is to remain unknown but to capture everything. So integral is the work to the final produce that without the cameraman there could be no show, no movie, the actors are reduced to a bunch of people playing make believe. However, with the cameraman in place, doing the work assigned everything leaps into being. Today though, today the work if not the Spirit is clearly on display. So much so that the people in Jerusalem don't really know what to think.

It's Peter, whose tongue has been lit on fire, even as the flame dissipated from his head. He opens his mouth and addresses the crowd. I would highly recommend reading the entire sermon this week as you have time. There, you'll find extremely pointed law and equally pointed and therefore comforting gospel on display. As Peter speaks, God's Word pours out and the Spirit wings each syllable into the hearts of the hearers. We are told about 3000 are baptized on this day.

It is an amazing display of the power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of these people and not only in the disciples who speak in tongues and confess the truths of God's Holy Word. Words which ultimately point to Christ and His saving work. But also in the hearts and minds of these Jewish people given the gift of faith and made true heirs of the promise of Abraham by the working of Spirit.

It's always at this point that I get a little jealous. Why doesn't this happen anymore today. I mean can you imagine? The roaring of a violent wind, tongues of fire dancing on our heads,

instantly speaking in languages previously unknown. That would really blow them away on the WELS connection! It might even knock the socks off the sceptics and doubters of our day. No doubt 3000 could be claimed again, if not even more.

Of course, it can be easy to do this with a whole host of other things too. If you watched our ascension service I called them the “if onlys”. If only we had the right advertising strategy, if only our pastors wore skinny jeans and polos when they preached, if only church came with laser light shows and pyrotechnics.

And again, none of these are necessarily evil in and of themselves but when we forget that the real vehicle for growth in the church, the body of Christ will always be the Means of grace well, that’s when I need the reminder that the Spirit is still working powerfully today in our world even though it isn’t always immediately seen. You see all the parts of Pentecost with which we are regularly impressed, they are simply a highlighter pointing us to the real power of the Spirit at Work. In Word and in Sacraments, we have the promise of our Triune God that the Spirit is active.

I’ve always been impressed with the slow and steady growth of God’s Church here. New folks come in even as others finish their race. Members share their faith with their friends, relatives, and neighbors. Oh, we may not have 3000 knocking down the door, but then I think it was Jesus who once told us that the angels themselves thought it pretty spectacular when just one sinner repented. Perhaps we should too. Maybe there are not tongues of fire signifying the presence of the Spirit these days, but in the means of grace we have His promise that He is there going to work with every bit as much power in the heart of the baby at the font, the person in the pew, or listening from home, the member at the Lord’s Table. And no, it may not have the same impressive punch as the immediate knowledge of other languages, but year after year young people profess their faith, learned through years of study of God’s Holy Word, hopefully not done with it all, but ready to begin another chapter in their lives of faith as they live and interact with their God every day just as countless others have done before them and continue to do today.

Perhaps Peter, or the Holy Spirit speaking through Peter, hit the nail on the head after all, *‘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 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.’* Notice again how it all happens, they speak, they see, dream of the Word of their God and all who call on His saving Name are saved as they are connected to the perfect life, innocent death and glorious resurrection of Jesus.

Brothers and Sisters, it is Pentecost Sunday in the church year. I think over the last few months we have seen the need for God’s Word displayed again and again in our society. Maybe in closer proximity than we had been in the past, we even saw the need from time to time in our own homes. Turns out even in pandemic the Devil works hard, death can be a constant fear and sin never ever goes away. As we begin to slowly start coming out of the fog and come to terms with whatever a “new normal” might be, may we continue to find our comfort and our strength in the power of the Spirit who works so mightily to connect us to our Savior Jesus, and all He has done for us. Yes, **THE HOLY SPIRIT GOES TO WORK POWERFULLY AT PENTECOST AND HE WORKS POWERFULLY STILL TODAY!** Amen.