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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
June 4, 2017  
Pentecost Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Acts 2:1-21, John 16:5-11

Hymns: 236; 235; 224; 38:3,4

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Joel 2:2-29

“And it shall come to pass afterward  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your old men shall dream dreams,  
Your young men shall see visions.  
29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Ascended Lord, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Promises

What are our experiences with promises? When people promise to do something for us how confident are we that they will actually do what they promised to do? I suppose it depends on the individual, and may also depend on the promise. We all take some promises more seriously than others. I don't exactly know how it is that we determine which are more sacred than others. In my experience the percentage of people that take an oath before God to be faithful to Him in all their ways are actually far less than perfect in keeping

that promise. When we confess our sins we promise God that we will amend our sinful lives. Aren't we making a promise that we are incapable of keeping? Does that mean that we shouldn't make such a pledge to Him who shed His blood for us? Of course we should make such a pledge and be earnest in it, seeking help from above, from the Holy Spirit who alone can empower us to be faithful and true to the Lord in all our ways. Which brings us back to the promise that we observe today on Pentecost Sunday. Jesus promised. Jesus promised to send another Helper, the Spirit of our God. It was a vitally important promise for the disciples. After His resurrection, right before Jesus' ascension, the Lord Jesus reminded the disciples of that promise and told them to tarry in Jerusalem until that promise was fulfilled. So today we consider the significance of that promise, but not from the account of Acts when it was actually fulfilled. Rather we shall be guided by the words of the Prophet Joel who wrote of this promise centuries earlier. Peter cited this prophecy on that great day of Pentecost, but the events of that Pentecost were only the beginning of its fulfillment. It continues yet today. So then, with the guidance of this same Holy Spirit let us consider --

## **THEME: The Promise of the Outpouring of the Spirit Fulfilled.**

We look first at

### **I. The Timing of the Spirit's Outpouring.**

Our text begins with --

**Joel 2:28a** "And it shall come to pass afterward  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;

To what does that "afterward" refer? As we look back in Joel's prophecy we see that Joel was warning of a time of judgment, and then says "afterward." How much afterward? Immediately when the drought ends and the locusts disappear? Or later still, at the time of the Messiah? The events of Pentecost give an indication that this "afterward" looked beyond the days of judgment that would befall Judah and the days of initial deliverance. This "afterward" looked to those days of deliverance that Jesus brought to this world. In our Scripture lesson Peter, by inspiration of the

Holy Spirit, interprets the meaning of this “afterward” by declaring “in the last days” in place of the word “afterward.”

This not only clues us in to the timing of “afterward,” that this refers to the time after the Savior came into the world, but it also gives us an important indication regarding the duration of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What happened on that Pentecost festival day in Jerusalem ten days after Jesus’ ascension was not the complete fulfillment of the prophecy, but rather the opening display of the Spirit’s power as the world entered into the last days, the last days in which we still live almost 2000 years later. This is the age of the Holy Spirit. This is the time when the Holy Spirit’s power to enlighten this dark world is evident. This is the time when the Lord is calling upon all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). To accommodate that repentance the outpouring of the Holy Spirit spoken of by the prophet Joel has not only *taken* place, but *is* taking place even as we live and breathe.

## **II. The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh.**

The extent of this blessing of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is clarified in the second line of our text, “**I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.**” When the Lord talks we need to pay attention. The Lord’s use of words are deliberate. “All flesh” stands in contrast to what the people of Joel’s day and before knew. Yes, they knew about the Holy Spirit. Yes, they understood that the Spirit of God was present at the time of creation. They were also familiar with David’s prayer in the 51<sup>st</sup> psalm which we read in our responsive introit this morning, which we sing as our response to the sermon in most of our services. We pray with David, “*Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.*” (Psalm 51:11-12)

Yes, they knew the Holy Spirit was important to their spiritual life and relationship with God, even as we know that to be true for us. However they didn’t look for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to be common among them. That was reserved for the prophets, like Moses or King David, or Isaiah and Jeremiah, or Joel from whose prophecy we have received our text. These were called to a special ministry and received visions, or dreams, or direct revelation from God which they were to then transmit to the people. Joel

prophesied that something broader and more wonderful and gracious was going to happen in the last days. The Spirit of God would be poured out on all flesh. This was what began on Pentecost when the tongues of fire appeared over the heads of the apostles and they began to preach of the wonderful works of God to the crowds assembled before them in Jerusalem, crowds that contained people from many nations of the world. And it happened again and again, and with more people and even more people. All flesh was broader than all people of the Jews. It happened in bold fashion among gentiles to whom the apostles preached, as when Peter entered the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the gentiles in that house thereby confirming that the he gospel was indeed to be proclaimed to people of the gentile nations as well as the Jews. It included people living out to the ends of the earth, wherever the Word of the Lord was proclaimed.

Now we need to look at the word chosen by the Lord a little more, for the Lord didn't simply declare that He would pour out His Spirit on all *people* or all *nations*. He said He would pour out His Spirit on all ***flesh***. Before we simply conclude that that's all it means, we should think about how the Lord uses the word "flesh" when referring to people. It is used by the Lord when speaking of the weakness of man, and the sinfulness of mankind. In these last days the Lord is pouring out His Spirit not only upon those of a pure heart, but upon those who must confess with the Apostle Paul, ***"I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; (Romans 7:18), O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*** (Romans 7:24). The Lord poured out His Spirit on Saul the persecutor, the one who hunted down and killed believers in Jesus Christ. The Lord called Saul to repentance and poured out His Spirit upon him so that he believed and confessed and boldly testified to the truth of salvation that is in Christ crucified, our risen and ascended Lord. Paul understood that he was weak in the flesh. He sinned, and was disgusted by it. Paul confessed that he was never more than a flawed clay pot which the Lord chose to hold a precious and wondrous gospel of forgiving grace in Christ Jesus.

So it is with us. We are flesh. We are sinners still. We are seriously flawed. We cannot in any way merit or deserve this gift of grace of

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and yet the Holy Spirit has been poured out into our hearts. You and I, all of us believers in Christ Jesus have been made vessels holding this precious gospel of God's grace and love in Christ.

The Spirit's outpouring is not something that is done solely for the individual's benefit. Even as it was done for the prophets to initiate and to empower their ministry, and to the apostles to initiate and to empower their lives of ministry, so we should learn from our text of –

### **III. The Spirit's Role or Function in the Christian's Life.**

Our text enlarges on the idea of all flesh by listing the varying roles we may have in life, and attaching to these differing roles Spirit driven functions that do not come naturally to man.

**Joel 2:28b-29** “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your old men shall dream dreams,  
Your young men shall see visions.  
29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”

Sons and daughters prophesying! It is good for us to recall that a prophet's job was to receive a message from the Lord and then communicate that message to others. In the early days of the New Testament Church there was direct revelation granted to a number of people, including not only the apostles, but also the seven deacons, and various individuals who were granted special gifts of the Holy Spirit, as the apostles experienced on Pentecost. These were early signs given to confirm the ministry of the Apostles and their outreach to the gentiles. With the close of the Apostolic era came the close of direct revelation and completion of the New Testament. While the functions in the Church changed as the Church grew, the outpouring of the Spirit did not. The Holy Spirit is a power to be revered and drawn upon in each and every Christian's life.

Apart from the Spirit we cannot please God. The Spirit strengthens us with the Word so that we can stand against the wiles of the devil and defeat temptation and live to the glory of God and our Savior

Jesus Christ. The Spirit fills our hearts with the message of the gospel so that our faith overflows and the words of Paul to the Romans are true for you and me as well

**Romans 10:8-10** “‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): <sup>9</sup> that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The Spirit who called you to faith through water and the Word, has put that message of God’s love and forgiveness in your mouth that it might cross your lips as you simply tell others that they are forgiven when they sin against you. Why? Because you know and treasure the forgiveness that God has brought you in Christ. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). So we forgive because He has forgiven us so much more. We believe unto righteousness and we confess that faith in Jesus that others too might believe and be saved.

One might have an initial reaction that this is for others to do but not me. That was not the message Joel was given by the Lord. It is inclusive. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit includes you and me and our children. And how often don’t we hear our children from a tender age confess that faith in Christ that we adults hesitate to put into words. The Spirit has come to you desiring that you also continue to put that hope that you have in Christ as our Living and exalted Lord into words for others to hear. This is the Spirit’s will for you, and it is the function to which He calls us, and for which He empowers us with His gifts and blessing.

**AMEN.**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)