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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
June 9, 2019
Pentecost Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:1-21
Hymns: 229; 232; 225; 412:3 (236:1,3)

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

Sermon Text: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-11

²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

^{16:4b} "And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

⁵ "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (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: The Pentecost Festival --

What is it all about? We all have some very definite images in our minds that we associate with Pentecost. The account of what happened on that one particular day as the disciples were gathered together in a house in Jerusalem stands out in our minds. We forget that the Jews had been observing the Pentecost festival for many centuries before that. It was one of their regular religious festivals. It was a sort of harvest festival or a thanksgiving festival that was associated with the harvesting of the early spring grains. It was annually observed, as ordained by the Lord, 50 days following the end of Passover. Many of the Jewish pilgrims who had come from distant lands to celebrate Passover would remain to also observe Pentecost. For many of these Jews this was a once in a lifetime pilgrimage. And so it was that the Lord chose this day for the maximum gospel impact of this event for the world, not just for Jerusalem or Judea and Galilee, but for the spread of the gospel throughout the world!

So today many Christians observe the Pentecost festival but for very different reasons than the Old Testament believers. We don't observe the Old Testament ceremonial festivals, and we are not doing that with Pentecost. We are celebrating a day of great grace and power in the coming of the Holy Spirit. Indeed with that Pentecost event the Lord was issuing in a new age of the earth, the age of the Holy Spirit.

This morning we are concluding a series of sermons based on texts from John's gospel and mostly from Jesus' valedictory address. Jesus was preparing the disciples for the times to come when His visible presence would be removed from the earth and the Holy Spirit would be directing God's plan of salvation for the advancement of

Christ's kingdom on earth. What this is about for us is actually --

**THEME: Knowing the Spirit's Work
for the Times in which We Live.**

It starts with an understanding of what it means to be --

I. Living in the Age of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told the disciples:

John 15:26-27 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning."

What is the coming of the Holy Spirit all about? There are many today who focus on charismatic signs and wonders such as speaking in tongues or faith healing. Many of these ideas began to arise during the first half of the twentieth century. This perceived need to replicate the signs and wonders that the apostles performed puts a false focus on the events of that day. It turns people's attention away from the message to the speaking in the languages of the pilgrims in Jerusalem on that day, and on the experiences of the people who were near the apostles in the early Church.

Please note that is not what Jesus was emphasizing in our text. Yes, on another occasion Jesus did tell the disciples to expect that they would perform miracles, along with the fact that they would be persecuted and die for Jesus' sake. However Jesus' emphasis was always on the message. And that was Jesus' primary point in this special address to the disciples the night before He died. He told them He would send the Spirit who would proceed from the Father. Jesus said this Helper (Remember from last week that word is really Paraclete, one who walks alongside you as your guide and protector.) this Helper was the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit would testify of Jesus. The Spirit would

direct them not only in writing the inspired Scriptures but in all the apostles would say and teach. **They would testify of Jesus.** And isn't that exactly what we read about in the Pentecost Scripture account!

The Apostles were teaching these people assembled in Jerusalem from many different countries of the world the wonderful works of God; yes in the native languages, but the message was the message of God's love and salvation for sinners. That was the Spirit's doing! It was just as Jesus had said; they would bear witness of all the things they had heard and seen because they had been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry. And the Spirit whose presence was made known to the apostles by the tongues of fire resting above their heads, and announced to Jerusalem by the sound of a great and mighty wind, the power of this Spirit was manifested in the changing of thousands of hearts that day! On that day three thousand men confessed their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and were baptized. That was the great miracle of Pentecost!

Timing is key to this event. Jesus told the disciples:

John 16:4-7 "And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

⁵ "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

We have all heard the expression, "**All in God's time.**" We may use that expression in encouraging people who are disappointed that greater things aren't happening in their lives, at least not as they may have envisioned them. But it is even more true when it comes to the advancement of the salvation of the world. Jesus was born in the fullness of time, **in God's time.** He died and rose

again when Jesus knew it was **time according to God's plan**; and so He went up to Jerusalem where His enemies took Him and killed Him, and we were redeemed according to God's plan. And so **God's timing** is evident in the coming of the age of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was in the world with His disciples it was the time of our redemption. When Jesus had fulfilled that mission of salvation it was time for Jesus to return to the Father, and that marked the time for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

It was not only to the advantage of the apostles that Jesus ascend into heaven and send forth the Spirit, it has been to our advantage also. When all was accomplished that had been written in the Scriptures concerning Jesus, than it was the **right time** for that gospel message to go out into all the world, and that was most certainly to our advantage. By the powerful working of the Holy Spirit and His direction of the gospel in written word and gospel proclamation we were called out of the darkness of sin and unbelief into His marvelous light! (1 Peter 2:9)

How blessed we are to be living in the age of the Holy Spirit. Let us consider more closely what Jesus had to teach us concerning --

II. The Powerful Working of the Holy Spirit

John 16:8-11 "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

As we read these words we see an outline of how the Holy Spirit works in the world as well as in the hearts of individuals. It becomes a matter of conviction. Jesus spoke of the world being convicted of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

When we read Jesus' words we note that He doesn't say the world would be convicted because of the law, or because of their conscience. We are all guilty of sin, but we are not convicted because of faith in Christ crucified. He says they will be convicted of sin because *they did not believe in Him*. On the day of Pentecost at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit we are told how this played out. When Peter rose up and defended the apostles' teaching, that they weren't a bunch of drunks in the midst of boisterous rambling, he declared the truth about Jesus! Peter concluded his sermon that day with these words:

Acts 2 32-33, 36 "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. ... ³⁶"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

The realization of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ struck them all! How could they have done this with the Lord of glory? So Jesus words found fulfillment right away on that Pentecost Day when the Spirit was poured out among the apostles. Many in that crowd stood convicted of sin. We read of their response to Peter's message in the next verse of Acts chapter two.

Acts 2:37 "Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"

You can sense the desperation in their words, and Peter's response is the only solution for those who are convicted of sin.

Acts 2:38-39 "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is to you and to your

children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." ... ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them.*"

They were convicted and then they were convinced that Jesus is the Christ. 3000 were baptized that day for the remission of their sins. Now the conviction that held their hearts was that of righteousness! This was not the righteousness to which they had previously clung so tightly, that righteousness of the law which can never atone for sin, which at our best is no better than filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6) No, they were convinced that the righteousness of Christ was given to them as the Spirit opened their hearts to believe.

Finally, Jesus had taught the disciples that when the Spirit came the world would be convicted of judgment. The fear of judgment can and does make sinners quake. Indeed the Lord will return in judgment on the last day, but the Lord Jesus speaks of a completed judgment, the judgment of the ruler of this world. Luther expressed this truth with these words: *"This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will. He can harm us none, He's judged the deed is done One little word can fell him."* (The Lutheran Hymnal 262:3)

That was the conviction that filled Martin Luther's heart. He knew that when Jesus died upon the cross He had crushed the serpent's head. Jesus had defeated the devil and disarmed him. The devil can no longer accuse us. And if he tempt us with the desires of the flesh or the persecution of the world, we need not fear because Christ rose triumphant from the grave. Jesus has gotten us the victory, and we need not fear the final judgment. We shall be received into the heavenly mansions where Jesus Himself has prepared a place for us. We shall be received

by our Father in heaven because He has judged us to be holy and righteous because we are covered by Christ's righteousness.

This gospel movement is what entered the world with the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus told the disciples was going to come and impact them personally as He sent them out into the world with His Gospel, This is the Work of the Holy Spirit that began 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. **This is what the Spirit does among us yet today.** This is how and why our mission endeavors are so richly blessed. Each of us knows Jesus, but each of us also knows that the Spirit dwells within our hearts, directs us through this life as we serve as His instruments for proclaiming the gospel to this sin darkened world.

We are witnesses of these things and the Holy Spirit continues to convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

“All hail the day of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Ghost!”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 232)

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. (Romans15:13)