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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  
May 23, 2021  
Pentecost Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Acts 2:1-21; John 7:37-39

Hymns: 224; 232; 233:1-4; 233:7

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

Sermon Text: Acts 2:22-41

<sup>22</sup>“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—

<sup>23</sup>Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; <sup>24</sup>whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. <sup>25</sup>For David says concerning Him:

*‘I foresaw the LORD always before my face,  
For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.*

<sup>26</sup>*Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;  
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.*

<sup>27</sup>*For You will not leave my soul in Hades,  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

<sup>28</sup>*You have made known to me the ways of life;  
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’*

<sup>29</sup>“Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup>Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, <sup>31</sup>he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. <sup>32</sup>This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all

witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Therefore 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.

<sup>34</sup> “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

*‘The Lord said to my Lord,*

*‘Sit at My right hand,*

*<sup>35</sup> Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’*”

<sup>36</sup> “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

<sup>37</sup> 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?”

<sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> For 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.”

<sup>40</sup> And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” <sup>41</sup> Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, our Risen and Exalted Lord, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: What are your mental images of Pentecost?

It is easy for us to focus on the surface miracles of Pentecost. First, among the disciples as they were gathered together there appeared the sign of the tongues of fire appearing above the disciples’ heads. We don’t know how long that lasted but this sign made it clear that something was happening among them that was truly extraordinary. Is that the first mental image you have? We also read in our Scripture lesson of the sound of the mighty rushing wind which caught many people’s attention so that a great crowd

gathered near where the disciples had been assembled. Many see that scene in their mind's eye.

What others find most remarkable was the apostles speaking in the many different languages of the people that made up that crowd. That is a miracle that some churches or sects continue to promote as a mark of true religion. However, they often lose sight of the fact that the disciples were all speaking in known languages, mother tongues of people in that crowd. The message delivered was not something foreign or novel. They proclaimed the truth of God characterized by those who heard them as "the wonderful works of God."

The Holy Spirit's coming on that great festival day of Pentecost was focused on accomplishing the next phase of God's plan for the salvation of sinners. Because of all this, Pentecost has a whole new meaning for us than it did for the Old Testament believer. For them it was a day of thanksgiving for the spring grain harvest. For us it is all about a great harvest of souls for the Lord. Let us consider --

## **THEME: Pentecost: the Commencement of the Age of the Holy Spirit.**

### **I. The Holy Spirit Directs the Message of Christ.**

So often presentations on Pentecost stop with the events leading up to Peter's sermon. Those are wonders that took place signifying the fulfilling of Jesus' promise to the disciples concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. However, those events are not a complete representation of the impact of the coming of the Holy Spirit. In our sermon theme the word "commencement" is used, regarding the age of the Holy Spirit. What happened on that day was the beginning of something that was to continue until the end of the age. The end of the age will be marked by the glorious return of Jesus to judge the world. What is happening in the world until Jesus' great and glorious return is what Peter and the rest of the apostles started doing on that Pentecost Day, continuing in that ministry throughout the remainder of their lives, and then continuing through the lives of other believers down to our own day.

There is so much for us to learn about the Spirit working through us by looking at Peter's sermon on that Pentecost Day. He began with a defense that we read as our Scripture lesson. He debunked the idea that the apostles were simply babbling drunks first by pointing out that it was still early in the day, and then by asserting that what they were witnessing was a fulfillment of the words of the Prophet Joel. Then Peter got to the meat of his message for the day, which is where our text begins.

Peter directed everyone's attention to Jesus, that Jesus whom they had all heard about, the One whom God had attested as being the Christ with the signs and wonders Jesus had worked before the people. They all knew about Jesus. What they didn't yet understand was that Jesus was their Savior from sin.

The things that had happened, that the whole nation was still talking about, was Jesus' sufferings and death. Peter made two important points concerning Jesus' sufferings and death. The first was that Jesus was delivered up by the determined purpose of God and with God's foreknowledge. God knew the evil that men would do, and God used the evil actions of men to serve His holy purpose in Christ Jesus.

The second point was regarding the sin laden responsibility of the crowd that stood before Peter on that Pentecost Sunday. They had taken Jesus by lawless hands, crucified Him, and put Jesus to death. (v.23) There was no passing off the responsibility to the leaders of the people alone. The mob outside of Pilate's palace had cried out together, "*Away with Him, Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*" (John 19:15) They were guilty. They had called out, "*His blood be on us and our children.*" (Matthew 27:25) This guilt was theirs as much as it was that of the Jewish Council. They had killed the Lord of glory. They were guilty of a horrific sin.

Peter did not shy away from preaching the law, and the guilt of sin. But neither did Peter stop with the preaching of the law. He immediately presented the wonder of a risen Savior. Starting with the prophetic writings of David in the Psalms, Peter showed how David had foretold the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Jesus' body would not suffer corruption. While David died and was

buried and stay buried, Jesus rose from the dead to live forevermore, to be exalted to the right hand of God.

Peter makes a special point regarding the events of Pentecost. Having ascended to the throne of God, Jesus received from the Father the promise regarding the Holy Spirit, which Jesus then poured out upon the earth starting with the apostles on that glorious Pentecost Sunday.

Peter's final point regarding Jesus was again taken from the prophecies of David in the Psalms.

*'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,*

*<sup>35</sup> Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." '*

*<sup>36</sup> "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

(V. 34-36) This was David's testimony regarding Christ being his own hope of everlasting life, and Peter boldly asserted that God the Father has made Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, our hope of everlasting life yet today.

The Pentecost truth that we have here is so important. Many in our American religious culture emphasize the Holy Spirit, and then go on to teach about inner feelings, and personal spiritual experiences, and it all becomes very subjective, as if the coming of the Holy Spirit is all about what wonderful things I can say about me and how excited I feel. What we actually learn from the events of that day is that the Holy Spirit directs sinners to the gospel. The events of that day were all focused on delivering the message of a crucified and risen and exalted Jesus. That is what the Spirit led Peter to proclaim, and most certainly it came by the Spirit's power and blessing that Peter proclaimed this message so clearly and powerfully.

That is what the Spirit still does among us also. The Spirit directs us to Jesus by showing us our sin and then leading us to Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. It was by the power of the Spirit working through this gospel of a crucified and risen Jesus that **we** have been called to faith and salvation.

The greatest miracle of Pentecost is that --

## **II. The Holy Spirit Calls Sinners to Repentance.**

Our text records the conviction of guilt in the hearts of that mass audience. *“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?”* (v. 37) The realization of what they had done hit them hard and left these people spiritually devastated. They pleaded for direction from the apostles. What were they to do?

That is always the question, when sinners feel the guilt and shame of their sin. What shall we do? Natural man’s first inclination is to do something to make it right. But we cannot make it right. It is far beyond us to make things right with a most holy God. The only answer is that which lies outside of ourselves and that is where Peter directed them.

*“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.’<sup>39</sup> For 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.’ ”* (v. 38-39) True repentance requires a complete change in the way we think about sin and righteousness. We are no more capable of that change of heart and mind than we are able to make things right with God. This call to repentance is a call for the Holy Spirit to turn the hearts of sinners away from sin, and to faith in Jesus.

Peter directed them to be baptized for the remission of their sins. The Holy Spirit works through the gospel in word and sacrament. The Holy spirit effectively works in hearts and brings a washing away of sin and guilt in the waters of Baptism. The Holy Spirit works a change in hearts and minds. The Holy Spirit has created new hearts within us also.

We are to be consistent and adamant in proclaiming the gospel. Salvation comes from outside ourselves. It comes to us from God the Holy Spirit creating faith in Jesus who died for us and rose again. All this was set in motion for us by God the Father sending His Son into the world that we might live through Him.

We now live in in the age of the Holy Spirit. We mark that wondrous Day of Pentecost, the sending of the Holy Spirit as the

opening of the last age of the earth, when “*God ... commands all men everywhere to repent.*” (Acts 17:30) In this age the Holy Spirit works wonders of grace day after day as the gospel continues to be proclaimed to sinners to the very ends of the earth, and Spirit calls them to faith and gives them the gift of eternal life.

Consider the wonderful working of God the Holy Spirit on that Pentecost day: “*And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’*”<sup>41</sup> *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*” (v.40-41) Peter stuck with proclaiming the Word to the people, and the Spirit worked a miracle of grace on that day. How busy all the apostles must have been as those who heard and believed desired baptism and received that washing of regeneration. Three thousand, **three thousand** were added to the number of believers that **one day!**

And so began the age of the Holy Spirit in which we live. While we are evidence, perhaps you might say exhibits, of the Spirit’s gracious power, let us also understand that the Spirit works through our testimony with great power. It is not our powers of persuasion that save anyone. It is the Spirit working through the Gospel. And so, we praise our Savior God for the wonders of His grace.

*“Come, Holy Spirit, from above  
With Thy celestial fire;  
Come and with flames of zeal and love  
Our hearts and tongues inspire.  
Be this our day of Pentecost,  
The coming of the Holy Ghost!”* (The Lutheran Hymnal 232:4)

**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)