

Pentecost / June 5, 2022

Acts 2:1-21

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Happy Pentecost morning. Pentecost is an Old Testament feast. It falls on the 50th day of Passover. It is one of three feasts that every Israelite was commanded to observe, in remembrance of the exodus from Egypt and the covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. Pentecost commemorates the giving of the Law to Israel through Moses. In the New Testament Era, devout Jews from throughout the Roman World, would make pilgrimage to Jerusalem for its celebration. This particular Pentecost was also the 50th day of Jesus' resurrection. As the Jerusalem Church gathered in worship, the Holy Spirit manifested Himself in a powerful, visible way, to empower the believers to proclaim the wonders of God, the good news of Jesus and the promise that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Jesus fulfilled the Law, given through Moses, by His sinless life, perfect obedience and sacrificial death. We are saved through Jesus and faith in His name, from everything that the Law could not save us; sin, the devil and death! On the day Israel commemorated the giving of the Law, the Holy Spirit manifested His presence and empowered the Church, to testify to the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus, to the people of Israel. Jews from every part of the Roman World were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. The sound of the believers speaking in many languages attracted a crowd. People wondered how it was possible and what it meant. Some dismissed it as drunkenness, saying “they are filled with new wine.” But they must have been drinking. No one drunk on wine speaks even one language intelligibly, let alone many languages. The Holy Spirit was empowering the Church to share the good news that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!

Pentecost marked the beginning of a period of explosive growth in the number of believers. Luke says the Jerusalem Church consisted of about 120 believers on Pentecost Morning. That number was about to grow exponentially. On Pentecost Sunday another three thousand people were baptized in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of sins. After that Luke says, “The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” When we think of the first Christian Pentecost, we are likely to envision the tongues of fire that appeared and rested on each believer. We marvel at the presence of the Spirit in the sound of a mighty rushing wind. We reflect upon the miracle of 120 Galileans speaking in other languages and each pilgrim hearing them declaring the wonders of God, in their own native language. Miraculous to say the least!

But the greatest miracle of Pentecost was the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting that great crowd of their sins through the law, opening their hearts to believe in Jesus and receive Him as the Christ through the gospel. Everyone saw the signs, but not everyone believed the gospel. Some ridiculed the believers and mocked the Spirit saying, “They are filled with new wine.” Despite the skepticism of some, many came to faith and were baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. There is nothing more wondrous than God's promise that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There is no greater miracle of the Holy Spirit than the gift of faith in Jesus as Saviour.

Pentecost was a unique day. The events recorded in Acts happened in the distant past, but the effects of that day continue to resonate in the Church and throughout the world today. The special effects of Pentecost were the sound of a mighty, rushing wind, tongues of fire and ecstatic speech. Those effects were special, but the substance of Christian Pentecost, which the effects framed, is the gospel of God's love. The substance of the Christian faith is His promise to forgive, heal and save everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus. The wonders caught people's attention, but it was the words spoken by Peter and the other believers that had the most profound effect on the souls of those who listened. They were convicted of their sin by the law and convinced of God's salvation through the gospel of forgiveness; the promise that “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

There is nothing more powerful or effective than the word of God. The word is the sword of the Spirit. It cuts deeper and is sharper than the finest two-edged sword. It's two edged in the sense that it both cuts and heals. It cuts to show us our sin. It heals by revealing Jesus to us as Saviour. The wind quieted. The fiery tongues dimmed. The believer's normal speech returned. The special effects passed away, but the word of the Lord endures forever! Through the word, the Spirit continues to convict people of their sin and to open their hearts to receive Jesus as Saviour. With or without special effects, the Spirit works the same miracle in the world today and in our hearts this morning. Faith in Jesus and the promise that everyone who calls on His name will be saved.

Christian Pentecost marks the beginning of the Church sharing the gospel with the world. Jesus said to the apostles, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Jerusalem was ground zero. Pentecost was day one, but that work continues today! Even as a ripple expands from the centre outward to infinity, so the work of the Holy Spirit through the church, continues to resonate throughout the world today. The point was not the signs and wonders. The point is the wonder of God’s love. His mighty work in giving Jesus to be our Saviour! The good news that everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved!

The miracle of Pentecost continues today. The Holy Spirit calls people to faith, gathers them into the Holy Christian Church and enlightens their minds through the knowledge of Jesus as Saviour. Every Sunday, throughout the world, people gather to worship God through faith in Jesus as Saviour. It’s a miracle! The miracle of Pentecost continues, as the gospel spoken by believers, goes throughout the earth. Like a ripple on the water which grows wider and wider, so the miracle of Pentecost continues in the world; as people hear the word, believe the gospel, are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ, receive forgiveness and the promise of eternal life, through faith in Jesus’ name.

Jerusalem was ground zero on Pentecost Sunday. The effect of the Holy Spirit was front and centre. Three thousand believed and received baptism in Jesus’ Name on that day alone. That’s a lot of people coming to faith on one day in one place. But I bet that a lot more than three thousand people come to faith each day and receive Jesus in their hearts as Saviour, through the word and by the working of the Holy Spirit. The world is so wide and our perspective is so limited. We notice but a fraction of the work of the Spirit throughout the earth. On Pentecost Sunday the church was concentrated in Jerusalem. Today the church is spread throughout the earth. The Spirit works constantly through the gospel, spoken by the Church. The Spirit never allows the word to return empty. You can believe that each day thousands of people come to faith and millions more are preserved in faith to life everlasting.

On Pentecost Sunday we consider the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in the world and in our lives. We praise God for the promise that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. We give thanks for the gift of faith; inspired, preserved and given growth by the Holy Spirit, through the hearing of the word. We marvel at the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the world, calling people to faith through the voice of the Church. We remember our part in the work of the Church. We pray that many more will come to faith, confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour and receive baptism into His death and resurrection.

Christian Pentecost is a celebration of Jesus. His fulfillment of the Law in our place. His sacrificial death to pay the debt of sin the law demanded. His glorious resurrection for our justification. St. John wrote, “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” We celebrate the grace of God in Jesus our Saviour. We rejoice in the good-news that God made Him who had no sin to be a sin offering. We praise God that in Him we receive the forgiveness of sin in time and will share in His resurrection in eternity. We thank the Lord for the promise that everyone who calls on Jesus as Lord will be saved. We pray the Holy Spirit to open our lips to share the good news of salvation in Jesus’ name with others. That’s how the miracle of Pentecost began in Jerusalem. That’s how it continues today; as believers tell others about Jesus and God’s promise that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved! A blessed Pentecost! In Jesus’ Name. Amen