

## An Apocalyptic Pentecost

Day of Pentecost – 06/08/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Acts 2:1-21 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 17, [Peter quotes Joel, who foretold,] **“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh...”**

[And then concluded in verses 20-21,] **“...before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

### **Introduction**

✘ Today we begin a new season in the Church year. It's been 50 days since Easter. We've been celebrating all that time that Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

➔ What a reason to celebrate – things really were finished! Jesus' death on the cross paid the bill in full for every sin of every man, woman, and child, of every age and of every language and nation.

➔ And Jesus' resurrection from the dead proved it. The righteous wrath of God the Father against all of our sin was satisfied by Jesus' death. His blood poured out and covered over every sin of every man, woman, and child, of every age and of every language and nation.

➔ Last week we remembered how Jesus' ascension into heaven as the Victor over sin, death and the devil opened heaven up to every man, woman, and child, of every age and of every language and nation, as well. God's work of salvation was finished!

✘ Yet Jesus was not yet entirely finished. Because unless men, women, and children around the world – whenever and wherever they were living, heard about all of it; heard about Jesus' death and resurrection, they could not be brought to believe in it, and no one would be saved!

➔ That's where today, the Day of Pentecost, comes in. It's been called the “Birthday of the Christian Church” because this is the day – the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Jesus' resurrection, and every day since, that the wind; that the breath of God; that the Holy Spirit pours out and blows mightily upon the Church!

➔ Why? To empower and move us, as Christ's church, to be His instruments for the spreading of that message; for the telling of that finished and saving work of Jesus to every man, woman, and child, of every age and of every language and nation.

### **I. The Spirit fulfills the exodus of the church (vv. 1–3).**

✘ So let's explore some of the significant nuances of that first Pentecost and how it directly impacts your life and my life right now today.

✘ Verse two in Acts chapter two says that “suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house” where the 11 apostles, plus Matthias, who had just been selected as Judas' replacement “were sitting.”

✘ This was not the first time though that a mighty wind had blown from God for the benefit of His people. Remember – it was 1,500 years earlier, that Exodus 14:21 says, “Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and Yahweh drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.”

➔ This was God's miraculous “breath” you could say, completing Israel's salvation from their horrific slavery under Pharaoh. God brought them through the divided waters that were certainly ominous and awe-inspiring to give them a new life of freedom. It was a birthday of sorts as well

- the beginning of God's chosen people for the purpose of furthering God's plan; in order to advance the blood line of the promised Messiah.
- ✘ Well, it's that same wind that blew those waters back, that now fills the room where God's chosen apostles have been gathered together.
  - ➔ You see, both in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament and the Greek language of the New Testament, the word that means "wind" – "ruach" (Hebrew) or "pneuma" (Greek), can also be translated as "breath" or "spirit".
  - ➔ So this is God's own word play where the "Spirit" (ruach) moving over the deep as the third person of the Triune God in Genesis 1:2 serves as the active, divine source of power; the One blowing the Red Sea back and breathing not only upon His apostles on Pentecost but also within them as His instruments when verse four tells us, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (pneuma) and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit (pneuma) gave them the breath to declare."
- ✘ And what does He give them to declare? Verse 11 says that the men of "every nation under heaven" (v.5) said, "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." Yes, there is no doubt; they were hearing of the works of Jesus on the cross, at the empty tomb and in His ascension that day.
  - ➔ So this wind; this breath; this Spirit from God, who is the very giver of life, now breathed upon, in and through His human instruments with the very breath of life – not earthly human life, but the Spirit-created and the Spirit-sustained life that only God's Spirit can give to us sin-filled and spiritually dead human beings.
  - ➔ Now, we shorten it all up and we call it "faith"; the assurance that when Jesus died and rose from death and ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, that He did it all for me; so that I might have a new and holy life that is cleansed of the guilt of my sin; the life that God promises with Him beyond this earth and into eternity!
- ✘ Do you get the connection now that the Spirit makes for us all here on Pentecost? When He comes blowing down upon those apostles, He was coming with the same powerful breath of God to work for His Chosen people on Pentecost just as He did earlier at the Red Sea.
  - ➔ Actually He is completing that saving work that He started centuries earlier, because now Jesus has won and finished God's saving work for the souls of all time. Here we see the Spirit delivering that work of salvation and forgiveness directly into the hearts and minds of men, women and children of all nations, around the world.
  - ➔ Yes, He brings us through cleansing and saving waters too; through the waters of our own Baptism that "now saves" us, 1 Peter 3:21 says, from our slavery to sin and the devil; that brings us, "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" into a new life of freedom!
- ✘ That new life, my friends, is yours today, tomorrow and forevermore.

## **II. The Spirit initiates the last days for the church (vv. 14–21).**

- ✘ How can I have the confidence to tell you that great news today? because of the Spirit's apocalyptic work there on the Day of Pentecost.
  - ➔ That word "apocalypse" has taken on all kinds of meanings over the years, and Hollywood's influence has muddled things up with a plethora of crazy images.
  - ➔ But at its root, the word simply means "to reveal" or "uncover" something that has previously been unknown; that is a mystery. "Apocalyptic" work points us specifically to those unknown things connected to the last days or the end times.

- ✧ And amid all of the excitement of wind, fire, and the apostles' many languages, Peter narrows the focus of the gathering crowd around them on Pentecost to see that these things are God's apocalyptic sign that what He has foretold through His prophet Joel is now beginning.
  - ➔ Pentecost is the start of what God calls "the last days." Christ had come as promised. He paid for sins on the cross. He conquered death in His resurrection and Satan was cast out of heaven at Jesus' ascension ten days earlier when Jesus took up His throne. And with all of that, at the sound of "a mighty rushing wind" (v.2) the Holy Spirit now ushers in "the end times."
  - ➔ Joel tells us that "God declares, ...I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh..." (v. 17).
- ✧ This is the time that you and I are living in right now, my friends. We are living in the last days between Jesus' ascension and His return.
  - ➔ As Peter tells us, this is the time to repent of sin, because we cannot face Jesus' coming judgement if we live in unbelief; if we have rejected the Spirit's free gift of life.
- ✧ For all of us then, Peter is calling us to take a sober look at ourselves; to stop pointing our finger of blame at everyone else and ask, "Who have I hurt with my selfish words and actions? What is my part in the conflicts around me? In the troubles that I face?"
- ✧ Because you see, the Spirit came not only as a wind, but also in tongues of fire, didn't He?
  - ➔ Most of us understand that fire is both destructive and regenerating in nature. It can burn up entire forests of old, dead wood and in doing so, it prepares the soil for an entirely new and vibrant forest of young and well-nourished saplings. Fire also protects and comforts people from the dangers of bitter cold temperatures in the winter; sustaining and giving life.
  - ➔ But there is another use that may be less familiar: the use of fire for purification. Malachi 3:3 speaks of Christ's coming on the Last Day and says, "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord."
  - ➔ When someone wants to refine and remove impurities from metal, the metal has to be melted with intense heat. It's only by that fire that the metal is separated from the impurities to be discarded so, when the process is done, you have "pure" gold or silver.
- ✧ We Christians see the Holy Spirit working His purifying process throughout our lives as the God uses the intense "heat" of the sorrows and struggles we face in life to drive sin away from us; to break our personal idols.
  - ➔ As Peter says, the day of Pentecost points us forward, in an apocalyptic fashion, to the Last Day (Acts 2:17), when the Spirit's sanctifying work will be brought to its fulfillment. It's then that we – all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus alone (v.21), will emerge on the other side in heaven clean and pure, to live before Him forever!
  - ➔ For now though, we in Christ's Holy and Apostolic Church must embrace the fires of this life and the Spirit's purifying work in humility; in honesty; and in repentance within His assembled church. For when we do, we are blessed with the assurance that we will live with Jesus in holiness and righteousness forever.

### **III. The Spirit reverses Babel thru the church (vv. 4–11).**

- ✧ Why is this so important? Well, remember the mess that mankind made at the tower of Babel – the mess we still make today in our pride and how God was forced to deal with that sinful rebellion? (Gen. 11:1–9)

➔ He had no choice. He had to forcefully spread the people around the globe by confusing the languages to humble all of the prideful souls, likes of us. And that pride has wreaked separation, rivalries and havoc to this very day.

- ✘ But at Pentecost, those tongues that were confused at Babel were brought back together and set right by the inspiring breath and the cleansing fire of the Holy Spirit.

➔ Even as the apostles spoke in the various languages of the nations, the Spirit brought them all together, in His godly power, into one unified and saving language – the language of Jesus' cross; the absolute truth of eternal salvation for anyone and "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord" Jesus in faith. This unity of faith; this glory of God's grace; this joy in knowing and serving Jesus; this reality within the one Holy Christian Church – this is a picture of eternity in the New Heaven and the New Earth when Jesus comes on the "day of the Lord" (v.20).

## **Conclusion**

- ✘ This is the apocalyptic nature of Pentecost; the Spirit's assurance for every man, woman, and child, of every age and of every language and nation; that "everyone ... everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v.21). Amen.