

## Receive The Holy Spirit

I preach this morning in the name of God, the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the Sunday in which we celebrate the fullness of God's spirit and power poured out upon all people. Now, the word "pentecost" is derived from the Greek "*pentēkostē*", which means "fifty days." Fifty days after the Passover was observed, the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated. The Feast of Pentecost (also known as the Festival of Weeks) is the second of the three great Jewish festivals, besides, of course, Passover (also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread) and the Feast of Tabernacles (also known as the Festival of Booths).

Believing in the Holy Spirit is one thing, but receiving the Holy Spirit is quite another. Every week in our worship service, we gather to worship and after you hear the message, we proclaim our faith and we confess our faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed, whereby we confess that we believe in God, the Holy Spirit. But believing in God, the Holy Spirit is something quite different than following in the footsteps of God, the Holy Spirit, being engaged with the Holy Spirit, being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today, I want to speak to you about receiving the Holy Spirit. Receiving the Holy Spirit is making yourself available to God to be filled. Receiving the Holy Spirit is being open to hear and willing to see the provision of God's promise. And receiving the Holy Spirit is declaring the faithfulness of God's great name even in the midst of confusion. So, our lesson today is Acts chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. And, as always, I invite you to take your Bibles and to follow along as we will be going through our lesson in some detail.

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the entire house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them

were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Receiving the Holy Spirit is being available to God to be filled. You see, we're told in verse 1 that “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.” “They” being not only the 11 apostles whom Jesus had previously called, but all the Jews who made the long voyage into Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost as they would year after year, because God called them and commanded them back in Exodus chapter 19, not to forget the hand of God's faithfulness in their life. For 430 years, they were under the bondage of Egypt and Pharaoh. For 430 years, they were in slavery to Egypt, and God, with His mighty outstretched arm, made a way for them when there seemed to be no way. And God is calling them in Exodus chapter 19, to never forget about the hand of God that reached down in their slavery, only to bring them into Himself.

The Feast of Pentecost was a sign to remember: to remember what God did in Egypt and to remember what God did at Mount Sinai as He called Moses and gave Moses, to God's people, the Commandments of God, whereby they were to live in covenantal relationship with Yahweh. You see, part of this Feast could not be fully celebrated until they were in the Promised Land.

God called them to remember and God called them to wait because the fullness of this celebration of Pentecost could not be experienced until they came into the Promised Land because part of the Feast of Pentecost for the Jewish people was a Festival of Harvests. They were to bring their first fruits before the Lord to honor and recognize that everything in their life comes from their God. They were to bring sheaves of barley, they were to offer themselves before the Lord, and to sacrifice. But how can you come into the Promised Land, how can you give your first fruits to God, when you are wandering in the wilderness for 40 years? So God called them to remember and God called them to wait.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Sounds familiar when Jesus said, "Wait. Do not go until you receive the promised Holy Spirit, which I have promised, which the Father said would come through me. And when you are filled with power, then go into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth" (*paraphrase of Acts 1:4-8*). God called them to wait and He called them to remember.

How about you? How is God calling you to remember His faithfulness today? How is God calling you to wait for His Holy Spirit? The waiting is over, the Holy Spirit has come! And the Holy Spirit has come to fill you with power from on high.

They were called to remember and they were called to wait, which is why they made themselves available to God. Is your life available to God? Not only to be used, but to be filled with His power once again? Is your life willing and able to be used and filled with God's almighty power so that His outstretched arm that came to you in your dire time of need, may be an outstretched arm and a merciful expression of God's steadfast love to those who are in the deep place of darkness in their lives? Are you available to be used?

The Jews were available to be used - they were all together in one place. And, they were willing to hear and eyes open to see, verse 2, "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them." Verse 6, "When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own native language. Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs - we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!'"

You see, receiving the Holy Spirit is being available to God to be filled. And receiving the Holy Spirit is being open to hear and willing to see the provision of God's promise.

I once heard a story about a man who was a speaker. He was on his way out the door one morning and he was in a rush. He got to the place where he was to speak, sat down at the head table waiting for his turn to speak, and he noticed he forgot his dentures. He elbows the man next to him and said, "Hey, do you have any dentures I could borrow?" The man kind of looks at him, no expression of surprise, gets into his briefcase, looks around for a couple of seconds, pulls out a pair of dentures and says to the man, "Here, try these!" The man tried them on and said, "No, I'm sorry, these aren't going to work. They're a little too big. Do you have anything else?"

Well, without hesitation again, he starts to go through his briefcase, pulls out another pair and says to the man, "Here, try these!" "No, these aren't going to work either, they're a little too tight. Do you have anything else?"

Well, again the man didn't blink an eye, got back into his briefcase to pull out yet another pair of dentures, and said, "Here, try these!" And the man said, "Perfect! These fit perfect! Thank you."

Well, the man went on to give his speech and at the end of his talk he wanted to find the man who provided these dentures for him. He said, "Oh man, thank you. I was running, you know, in a hurry this morning. I ran right out the door with my breakfast in my hand and forgot my dentures. You saved the day! You came to the rescue. Thank you! And also, by the way, where's your office? I'm looking for a new dentist in town." The man looked up to him and said, "I'm sorry, I'm not a dentist. I'm the local funeral director."

Be open; be willing. Be open to hear, willing to see, because God's provision oftentimes comes when we least expect it. That was certainly true for the Jews,

verse 2, "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven." They heard the voice of God blowing from heaven and in verse 3, "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire," divine speech from God creating *ex nihilo* - "out of nothing." This confusion that we see in Genesis chapter 11 is now being reversed, from the Tower of Babel into the divine speech of God for clarity and unity: "that this is the promise that I have been giving to my people all along and yet the Holy Spirit was there all along."

Now, the fullness of God's Holy Spirit has come; the fullness of God's power has come; the fullness of God's strength has come. "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire," this divine speech that "came and rested on each of them." And they heard the mighty rushing wind from heaven.

What do you hear today? Do you hear the mighty rushing wind of the heavenly, glorious presence of Christ speaking to you today? Do you see the tongues of fire and the divine speech of God leading your pathway into the pathway of peace? What do you hear? What do you see?

Pentecost is the day on which their ears were opened to hear and their eyes were unblinded to see. But understand this: what you and I see is not what others see. Sometimes, it's downright confusion, verse 12, "Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?' Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'they have had too much wine.' Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!'"

You see, being filled with the Holy Spirit is making yourself available to God to be filled. Receiving the Holy Spirit is being open to hear and willing to see the provision of God's promise. And lastly, receiving the Holy Spirit is declaring the faithfulness of God's great name even in the midst of confusion. And Peter did just that.

Peter, the one who not only denied his Lord one time, not two times, but three times. Peter, the one who said to Jesus, "I will never leave you nor forsake you, even if I have to go, Jesus, and be crucified with you. I will be your right hand man" (*interpretation of Matt. 26:33, 35*). Peter, the one who warmed himself by the fire when the slave woman said, "There, he's one of them" (*paraphrase of Matt.26:69*).

Peter, yes, that Peter, who denied Jesus. Who not only believed in the Holy Spirit, but was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit because out of the people's confusion, Peter brought clarity. Out of the people's amazement, Peter offers the answer, verse 17, "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

What *has* happened is a result of what God said *would* happen. What Amos prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel some 800 years prior is what Joel is prophesying to the southern kingdom of Judah. What *has* happened is a direct result of what God said *would* happen. And what did He say would happen? Verse 17, "'In the last days, God said, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.'" And if then and there were the last days to them, how much more are we living in the last days, today?

Jesus said in the Holy Gospel of Matthew, the 24th chapter, beginning in verse 4, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All of these

things are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and to be put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

Jesus said, “He who stands firm to the end will be saved” (*Matt. 24:13*) and Peter said, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” too (*Acts 2:21*). Man, I tell you what, what a day we are living in today. We are living in unprecedented times. We are living our lives through a pandemic that none of us has ever lived through before. We are seeing exactly what Jesus Christ told us we would see: that the increase of wickedness and the love of most is growing cold. Even as this week, we heard of yet another African-American man whose life was innocently murdered because of the color of his skin.

We are living in an ever-increasingly secular society whose claim of intolerance has blinded our eyes and hardened our hearts to the reality that there is a right and there is a wrong. There is a God, who will hold our nation accountable. And today, on this day of Pentecost, today on this day that we celebrate the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, I believe that He is calling many by the sound of my voice to repent of their sins and turn back to the God whose love and mercy awaits you with open arms and open heart to receive you because He created you, He made you, He loves you. You may be walking outside of the fold of God today, but His arms are wooing you in. His love is steadfast. He pursues you in the night; that voice who is speaking to you, He is calling you and He wants to pour out His Holy Spirit upon you.

Jesus said, “No man can come into the Father unless the Spirit draws him” (*Jn. 6:44*). Jesus, by His Holy Spirit, is calling you today. Would you respond to Him in faith? Be filled with the Holy Spirit today because we are living in the last days. Joel said, “In the last days, God's Spirit would be poured out” (*c.f. Joel 2:28, Acts*

2:17) and then and there were the last days, how much more are we living in the last days today?

My dear friends, do not put off for tomorrow what the Holy Spirit is calling you to do today. Today is the day of your salvation. Today is the day the Holy Spirit is calling you home. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). And this promise is not only for you: it's for your children, it's for your family. Would you receive the Holy Spirit today? If you receive the Holy Spirit there, let me hear you say "Amen!"

Wherever you are listening, wherever you are gathering from around the world, allow me to pray with you. If you have never received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, we would love to pray with you today, to lead you in prayer. Would you pray with us, wherever you are listening, wherever you are gathered in this worship service? Pray with me, say:

"Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner and I need your forgiveness.  
Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit upon me, wash my sins away. Throw my sins into the sea of forgetfulness to be remembered no more.  
Thank you, Lord, for your grace and your mercy.  
Thank you that on this Pentecost Sunday, I can say in my heart of hearts that I am yours and you are mine.  
This Jesus, we pray in your Holy name.  
Amen"