

5/15/05 Sermon:

"All Who Call on the Name of the Lord Will Be Saved!"

(Texts: Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1-21; John 16:5-11)

Why so much of the color red today? I'm wearing red stole. The altar parament is red. We have a banner with the color read. Also, the front of the sanctuary is filled with red flowers. What's up with all this red?

Well, the color red is symbolic of the Holy Spirit and His work in our lives. In fact, today we celebrate Pentecost. That word "Pentecost" is the Greek word for "fifty". Pentecost refers to a Jewish festival that took place fifty days after the Passover -- the night before Jesus died on the Cross.

However, in our reading from Acts we heard about a Pentecost festival like no other. Jesus had recently ascended to His Father to reign with Him in glory over all creation. After that, Jesus kept His promise.

You see, before He ascended, Jesus said: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

As you know, Jesus kept His promise. On the day of Pentecost His disciples were in Jerusalem. Many other Jews from various regions of the world had also come there for the Pentecost Festival.

Suddenly, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in a unique and special way. There was the sound of rushing wind and fire hovering over the disciples heads. In addition, the Holy Spirit enabled them to proclaim the mighty works of God in all the various languages of the people who were there that day.

Now, at this point I know what we might be tempted to think. *"Why doesn't God do awesome signs and wonders like that today? All we have is readings from Holy Scripture, sermons, baptism and Holy Communion. How ordinary. How boring. It would be so much more inspiring if we could have some Pentecost wonders today!"*

Yes, I'm afraid that our sinful nature leads us to take for granted the gifts God has given us and instead long for things we think will be more exciting or inspiring. The problem is that we often end up taking our focus off of Jesus while we embrace other things God has not given us.

For example, in our world today some people de-emphasize baptism, preaching and the Lord's Supper. They focus instead on wonders and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. But what supposedly passes for wonders and manifestations of the Spirit are at best laughable and at worst demonic.

Some pretend to speak in tongues when all they are doing is uttering gibberish. Some claim to interpret such tongues but then speak things that are in conflict with Holy Scripture. Worse yet, such things as uncontrollable laughter, convulsions, and making animal sounds are supposedly the work of the Spirit.

Still others believe that the Spirit manifests himself today by giving us more practical things than teaching about sin and the work of Christ. We would rather hear sermons that give us principals for successful living. We would rather hear sermons that affirm our choices and lifestyles. We would rather hear sermons that entertain us and make us feel good inside. This is what passes for the work of the Holy Spirit today.

We must repent of this worldly spirituality. We are just as guilty as the crowds that were present during that Pentecost festival almost 2000 years ago. We, too, often ignore the Holy Spirit and instead we pay attention to the spirit of this age -- which is the deception of the devil in disguise.

In fact, if you recall our reading from Acts you will not that the people did not respond to the wonders of the Spirit in a proper way. Some were confused and perplexed because they were not sure what was going on. Others actually responded with scorn and mockery.

The situation changed for the better only when the Spirit moved Peter to quote Holy Scripture and preach an ordinary sermon in a common language they could all understand.

First, Peter quotes from the book of the prophet Joes. Peter explains that the signs and wonders of the Spirit are the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. In fact, part of this prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus' died. Remember, there was an earthquake and the sky turned black.

Then on the day of Pentecost the rest of Joel's prophecy is fulfilled: God pours out His Holy Spirit on His people in a special way as a sign that something even better is about to take place. In fact, the last line of Joel's prophecy reads: **"AND EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."**

My friends, the REAL miracle of Pentecost is that the Holy Spirit uses the preaching of Holy Scripture to point us to Jesus so that we can call on His Name and be saved from sin and death and live as the Lord's people forever.

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Do you know what this means? You are experiencing TODAY the very same miracle that the crowds in Jerusalem experienced on the Day of Pentecost almost 2000 years ago. We get to experience the miracle of Pentecost in this sanctuary when the Spirit brings Christ's gifts through the reading of Scripture, preaching, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

At this point I would like to share with you the sermon that the Spirit moved Peter to preach on the Day of Pentecost -- a sermon that resulted in about 3000 people receiving God's gifts of repentance and faith in Christ. I want you to listen carefully to Peter's sermon because the Holy Spirit has also given these words for YOU. I will begin with Acts 2:22 -- Peter says:

Ac 2:22 "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. Ac 2:23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Ac 2:24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. Ac 2:25 David said about him: 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Ac 2:26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, Ac 2:27 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. Ac 2:28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

Ac 2:29 Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. Ac 2:30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Ac 2:31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. Ac 2:32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Ac 2:33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. Ac 2:34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand Ac 2:35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Ac 2:36 Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Ac 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Ac 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ac 2:39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Did you hear that? We have the same wonderful gifts they had. Holy Scripture. Preaching. Baptism. Later on in Acts ch. 2 we hear about "The Breaking of Bread" -- an early name for the Lord's Supper -- a gift we also receive today!

Today we celebrate Pentecost! The miracle that began almost 2000 years ago in Jerusalem has continued throughout the centuries and that's why we're here today. Because of Pentecost, the words of Jesus have been fulfilled when He said to His disciples: **"...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the very ends of the earth."**

Because of these words of Jesus we have received the miracle of Pentecost: The Spirit who works through the preaching of Holy Scripture to point us to Christ so that we might call on His Name and be saved.

Because you are God's forgiven people, you also are His witnesses in the world today. The miracle of Pentecost continues as the Holy Spirit moves us to study Holy Scripture so that we can speak it faithfully and thereby point people to Christ and all He has done for us lost sinners. God wants all people to hear and believe these words of the prophet Joel: **"ANYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED!"** Amen!