

Title: Empowered to Be Witnesses: The Purpose of Pentecost

Sermon Summary:

This sermon explores the transformative power of the Holy Spirit and our calling as witnesses for Christ. Drawing from Acts 1:4-8, the message emphasizes that God interrupted humanity twice—first at the Tower of Babel by scattering people through confusion of languages, and second at Pentecost by gathering people through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not merely for emotional experience but for empowerment to serve as effective witnesses. A true witness is someone who has personally experienced God's transforming power and can testify to what they have seen, heard, and encountered. The sermon distinguishes between salvation (being baptized into the body of Christ) and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (being baptized into power for service), emphasizing that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey. Before Pentecost, the disciples were fearful and hidden, but after Pentecost, they became bold proclaimers of Christ, willing to face persecution and death for their testimony.

Key Points:

- God interrupted humanity at Babel by confusing languages to scatter people, and at Pentecost by giving languages to gather people for witness
- A witness is not merely someone with information but someone who has experienced God's power firsthand and testifies to it
- There are different types of witnesses: eyewitness, expert witness, character witness, and material witness—all applicable to Christian testimony
- Personal testimony is powerful and irrefutable because it is based on individual experience with God
- The baptism of the Holy Spirit is separate from salvation and is specifically for empowerment to serve and witness effectively
- The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God
- Before Pentecost, disciples were fearful; after Pentecost, they became bold witnesses willing to die for their faith
- True witnesses have three marks: they have seen something, they speak what they know, and they live what they declare
- Our lives become the evidence of God's transforming power
- Babel was about self-promotion; Pentecost is about promoting Christ

Scripture Reference:

- Acts 1:4-8 (primary focus)
- Genesis 11 (Tower of Babel)
- Acts 2 (Day of Pentecost)
- Acts 4:20
- Acts 5:32
- Hebrews 13:5
- Psalm 34:1

Stories:

- The Tower of Babel narrative where God confused languages and scattered humanity
- The Day of Pentecost where God gave languages and gathered believers for witness
- Personal testimony of the preacher's wife being hospitalized for three months at MUSC with mounting medical bills, and God's provision through a friend's help and ultimately a refund from the hospital despite bills exceeding \$300,000
- The transformation of Peter from denying Jesus before Pentecost to boldly proclaiming Christ after Pentecost
- Stephen's martyrdom after Pentecost as an example of bold witness
- The preacher's personal testimony of transformation from a life of drinking, smoking, drug use, and sin to becoming a saved, sanctified believer
- The blind man's testimony in John 9: "One thing I do know. I once was blind but now I see"
- Jeremiah's experience of trying to hold his peace but feeling fire shut up in his bones, compelling him to speak