



Pentecost

Kicking It Off

If you could instantly speak any language fluently, which would you choose and why?

Read:

Acts 2:1-13

Summary

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” ¹²And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Significant Quotes from Sermon

- "Weakness isn't about beating yourself up or saying 'I'm so incapable.' You can do a lot of things on your own. The question is: Do you need someone stronger than you? Do you want to be in relationship with someone who is stronger than you? This is where prayer life begins—when you understand that being a 'lone wolf' isn't the right way."

- "When I pray, I can pray with confidence not because my words are curated in a correct formula, but because the Holy Spirit is in me. Christians don't need to be so anxious when they pray. Even if your prayer isn't perfect, the Holy Spirit will be the one to interpret and intercede on your behalf."
- "A childlike faith says, 'Daddy, I need your help, and however you do it, whatever you do, I know it's going to be good because Scripture tells me so.' A childish faith says, 'God, here's my problem, and here's exactly how you need to fix it.' This approach ruins your prayer life because you're putting God in a box."

Discussion Questions

1. **Was there anything from the sermon or the passage that stuck out to you?**
2. We often evaluate churches by visible metrics like attendance, programs, and facilities, yet the early church began simply with the Spirit filling ordinary believers. **What would change in how you view your own spiritual life if you measured it by dependence on the Spirit rather than by what you produce or accomplish?**
3. The believers at Pentecost immediately began proclaiming what God had done, making their faith a public declaration rather than a private experience. **In what areas of your life have you been tempted to keep your faith private, and what holds you back from speaking about what God has done?**
4. Pentecost reversed the division that occurred at Babel, unifying people across language and culture through the Spirit's power. **Where do you see division or miscommunication in your relationships that might need the Spirit's work to bring understanding and unity?**
5. The Spirit does not fill us simply for our own benefit but to send us out on mission, often to people closer than we expect. **Who in your everyday life, perhaps a neighbor, coworker, or family member, do you sense God may be calling you to reach out to?**

Sermon Notes

Acts 2:1–13

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” ¹²And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Outline

1. The Spirit Creates the Church (vv. 1–4a)
 - a. Before Pentecost: disciples gathered and waited, but the church did not yet exist
 - b. Gathering alone does not constitute the church; the Spirit's presence does
 - c. Acts 2:1–4: Spirit descended as tongues of fire, filling all who were present
 - d. Pentecost marks the birthday of the church
 - e. Without the Spirit, all ministry efforts (children's, youth, worship) are ultimately powerless
 - f. The church is not built by human hands, programs, or budgets
 - g. We must be a Spirit-dependent community, not a human effort-driven organization
 - h. Christmas parallel: the beauty is not what we give but what God has given us in Christ

2. The Spirit Empowers the Church for Witness (vv. 4b–11)

- a. Acts 2:4b–11: believers spoke in tongues, proclaiming God's mighty works
- b. First act of the Spirit-filled church: speaking the word of God
- c. Church is not meant to be a private experience but a public proclamation
- d. Pentecost reverses Babel: languages become bridges rather than barriers
- e. The Spirit is indiscriminate, unifying believers across nation, ethnicity, gender, and age
- f. All believers are called to proclaim, not just the pastor
- g. Small groups should be places of mutual proclamation, not passive listening
- h. Satan wants faith privatized; a private faith needs little ongoing Spirit power

3. The Spirit Sends the Church to the Nations (vv. 5–13)

- a. Acts 2:5–13: devout Jews from every nation heard and were bewildered
- b. God orchestrated Pentecost: gathering people, timing the Spirit's arrival, preparing hearts
- c. Pentecost is not the destination but the launching point of mission
- d. Being filled with the Spirit is the means, not the goal; proclamation is the goal
- e. God sends us on mission, often to nearby neighbors, coworkers, and family
- f. We cannot convert anyone; the Spirit does the work of evangelism
- g. Our purpose: glorify God, full stop
- h. The means: through the Spirit's power, Christ's blood, and the Father's will
- i. God can do more in an instant than we can in a lifetime
- j. Prayer: that the Spirit would fill us so we can proclaim his good works

Notes

What makes a church a church? It is not the building, the budget, the size of the congregation, or even the quality of the music. It is not the programs, the children's ministry, or the eloquence of the preaching. The church, at its most fundamental level, is created by the Spirit of God. This is the foundational truth that emerges from the account of

Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, and it carries significant implications for how we understand our identity and mission as believers today.

The word "church" comes from the Greek term *ekklesia*, which does not simply mean "gathering" or "fellowship." It means "those who are called out." This distinction matters. The early church understood that being called out was part of their DNA, that they existed not merely to assemble but to be sent, to proclaim the good news to the ends of the earth. This calling out has a double meaning: we are called out of the world to belong to God, and we are called out into the world to fulfill the Great Commission.

Consider the scene before Pentecost. Jesus had risen from the dead and spent forty days with his disciples. Then he ascended, leaving them with a simple command: wait. For ten days, the disciples gathered in Jerusalem, not knowing what they were waiting for. They met together regularly. They prayed. They fellowshiped. But here is the critical point: the church did not yet exist. Gathering together does not make the church. The Spirit makes the church.

This is a humbling reality. We cannot manufacture the church through our own efforts. We cannot create authentic spiritual community through better programming, more engaging worship services, or superior organizational structures. The Spirit of the living God must reside in us, fill us, and speak through us. Without this, all our religious activities, however well intentioned, amount to nothing more than a Seahawks fan club with better theology.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, the disciples were gathered together, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind. Divided tongues as of fire appeared and rested on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. This was the birthday of the church. Not because they were in the right place or doing the right things, but because the Spirit descended and filled them.

This understanding should shape how we evaluate churches, including our own. We tend to assess congregations based on visible metrics: attendance, budgets, the quality of children's programs, the theological depth of the sermons. But none of these things constitute the church. The Spirit's presence constitutes the church. Without the power of God, children's ministry is useless. Youth ministry is useless. Gathering on Sunday to claim we are glorifying God is, apart from the Spirit, an exercise in futility. We are incapable of properly glorifying God in our own strength.

When the Spirit filled the believers at Pentecost, the first thing they did was speak. They began to proclaim the mighty works of God. This is not incidental. The Spirit empowers the church specifically for witness. The identity of the church is tied to proclamation.

What happened next was remarkable. Jews from every nation under heaven were dwelling in Jerusalem. When they heard the commotion, they gathered and were bewildered because each one heard the believers speaking in his own native language. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, and many others heard the works of God proclaimed in their heart languages. The Spirit was breaking down barriers to communication.

This is the reversal of Babel. At the Tower of Babel, humanity's pride led them to build a structure reaching to the heavens, thinking they could become like God through their own achievements. God scattered them and confused their languages as both judgment and mercy, preventing their self destruction through unchecked arrogance. At Pentecost, the Spirit reverses this curse. Languages are no longer barriers but bridges. Understanding replaces confusion. Unity replaces division.

The church is not intended to be a private experience. It is meant to be a public proclamation. This is why preaching exists, not just from one person behind a pulpit, but from all believers to one another. The early church was not a crowd quietly listening to one teacher. It was a community where everyone proclaimed what God was doing, what God had done, what God would do.

This has implications for how we live between Sundays. Small groups should not be places where one person teaches while others passively listen. They should be gatherings where believers share how God is moving in their lives, how he has moved in the past, and how they sense him leading in the future. Every believer is called to speak the word of God through the power of the Spirit.

The enemy of our souls wants faith to be a private experience. He wants us to keep our relationship with God to ourselves, to avoid the awkwardness of spiritual conversation, to treat our beliefs as personal matters that should not intrude on public life. But a privatized faith does not need the Spirit's power on a daily basis. If your faith is entirely internal, you have little need for spiritual empowerment beyond your initial salvation. The Spirit's ongoing power is given for witness, for proclamation, for the public declaration of what God has done.

Pentecost was not the church's arrival at its destination. It was the launching of the mission. Being filled with the Spirit is not the goal; it is the means. The goal is the proclamation of what God has done.

God orchestrated every detail of Pentecost. He gathered people from around the world to Jerusalem. He knew when the Spirit would come and ensured the right people were in the right place at the right time. This was not the result of the disciples' marketing techniques or strategic planning. God was the one leading their footsteps.

This same God is sending you on mission. He is sending you to proclaim his works, to be his witness. And the mission field may be closer than you think. For many, the ends of the earth is the neighbor's doorstep. It is the coworker in the next cubicle. It is the family member you have not spoken to in months.

Here is the liberating truth about evangelism: you cannot convert anyone. You cannot convince them or change them. This is not discouraging; it is freeing. The Spirit does the work. When you share what God has done, the Spirit is the one who opens hearts and brings people to faith. When conversion happens, you do not congratulate yourself on your persuasive skills. You praise God for what he alone can do.

Our purpose as the church is to glorify God. Full stop. But the way we accomplish this must be powered by the Spirit, through the blood of Jesus, by the will of the Father. Apart from the Trinity, we are incapable of fulfilling our calling. It does not matter how many

people attend, how large the budget is, or how effective the programs appear. Without the Spirit of God, we cannot do what God has called us to do.

God can accomplish more in thirty minutes than we can in a lifetime. He can do more in an instant than we could do in a thousand years. Pentecost is God's invitation to partner with him, to go where he sends, to speak the words he gives. The question is whether we will accept that invitation or continue trying to build the church through human effort alone.

The prayer of a Spirit dependent church is not simply to be filled for the experience of fullness. It is to be filled so that we can proclaim God's good works to a world that desperately needs to hear them.