

Pentecost Sunday – God's Power for God's Work

5/20/18 – Pastor Randy

Acts 1:3-8

During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God. Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 2:1-4

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

Today is Pentecost Sunday. It is a day on the Christian Church calendar that is not nearly as well known as Christmas and Easter but just as important to the history of the church. Many Christians, if asked, "What is Pentecost?" would answer, "That was the day that the promise - first given by John the Baptist, and then repeated by Jesus - that the disciples would be "baptized in the Holy Spirit" was fulfilled. But that answer does not tell us what Pentecost was, it only describes what happened on the first Pentecost following Jesus crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

Pentecost is the Greek term meaning "fiftieth" and it was used as an alternative name for the fourth of the seven sacred annual feasts of Judaism; the "Feast of Weeks" which in Hebrew is known as "Shavout". The reason it was called Pentecost was because it was scheduled to be celebrated on the fiftieth day following the Feast of Firstfruits, which immediately followed Passover.

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In the first chapter of the Book of Acts, Luke tells us that Jesus instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Luke also indicates that the time Jesus spent with his disciples after His resurrection and prior to His ascension was 40 days. In Acts chapter two Luke records that it was on the day of Pentecost that the disciples were filled with the Spirit in fulfillment of the promise Jesus had just reminded them of. If Jesus was crucified during Passover (John 19:14;31) and rose again at the time of the Feast of Firstfruits, and we count 40 days from his resurrection until his ascension and Pentecost took place fifty days after Jesus resurrection, that means Jesus' disciples waited for ten days for this promise. Why? Why did God wait 10 days until the Feast of Pentecost to baptize them in the Spirit? Because there is significance to the timing of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

The NT authors, writing under the inspiration of God, draw a connection between the significant turning points in the storyline of Jesus redemptive work for us and the OT sacred feasts which God instituted. That is because within each of those feasts resides prophetic significance related to Christ's redemptive work.

Let's take a brief look at the relationship between the crucifixion, resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Jewish feasts that those momentous events coincided with.

1. The crucifixion took place at the time of the first sacred Jewish Feast; the Feast of Passover. The Passover served as the perfect prophetic background for Jesus ultimate act of redemption. The Passover Feast served as a continual reminder of God's sovereign and miraculous intervention in the history of the Israelites when He redeemed them from Egypt. What does it mean to be redeemed?

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Redemption has to do with deliverance and liberation. The Israelites were in enslaved in Egypt for about 400 years. God called Moses to go to Pharaoh the King of Egypt and command him to let God's people go. Nine times God brought some kind of plague upon the Egyptians for refusing to release the Israelites. None of these nine judgments provided sufficient motivation for Pharaoh to release the Israelites. Then the Lord instructed Moses to tell each family among the Israelites to take a physically flawless lamb from their flock. They were to kill the lamb and eat it but more importantly they were to take the lamb's blood and put it above and on the sides of the door to their homes. All the families in Egypt that did not have blood applied to the doorframes of their homes would suffer the death of the firstborn male child in the home. God told Moses that whenever He would see the blood applied to the door frames of a home, He would 'pass over' that home and it would be spared from death. That is how the Feast of Passover derives its name.

Jesus clearly understood His death as fulfilling the ultimate act of deliverance from God's judgment and from slavery to sin which was foreshadowed in the Passover event. Jesus associated his death with the death of the passover lamb in Egypt. In Mark 10:45 where Jesus described his death as a "ransom for many". The word "ransom" connects the liberating effect of his death with that of the Passover lamb. Jesus drew an even more explicit connection between his death and the death of the lamb at Passover when he gathered with his disciples for the last supper during Passover he redefined the meal and made it about His death. The re-enacting of the Passover meal serves as a memorial to Israel of the protection from God's judgment and liberation from evil through the blood of a lamb. Now, re-enacting the last supper – which we call the Lord's Supper - becomes the memorial meal for Christians to remember the eternal and ultimate protection from judgment and the eternal and ultimate liberation from sin, evil and injustice, effected by Jesus death, the Lamb of God who takes away the son of the world.

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The NT authors learned this truth from Jesus and expressed it in their writings:

"...knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." - 1 Peter 1:18,19 (NASB)

"For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed." - 1 Corinthians 5:7 (NASB)

2. The resurrection of Christ took place at the time of the Feast of Firstfruits. Scholars debate the precise timing of Passover. Some suggest it occurred one day after Passover (Sunday) and others suggest it was the second day (Monday). Regardless, Paul showed us this feast was pointing to Jesus' resurrection as the guarantee of our future resurrection as part of a great "people harvest" that would be brought into God's family.

*But in fact **Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep... For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits**, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

- 1 Cor. 15:20-23 (ESV)

3. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place at the time of Pentecost (Shavout: The Feast of Weeks). The reason the Father and the Son chose this time to send the Spirit to fill and empower the disciples is because of its relationship to the theme of the harvest.

Jesus frequently used "harvest" as a metaphor to describe the people that He came to save. Sharing the gospel with the result of people coming to faith in Christ as their Savior and Lord is described as reaping and gathering in a harvest of souls.

In Matt. 9 we read that Jesus went throughout the cities and villages proclaiming and demonstrating the good news of the kingdom and then he

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said to his disciples, "The **harvest** is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

The purpose of the baptism in the Spirit is clearly spelled out for us in Acts 1:5-8. Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would empower them live as witnesses about Him to the whole world.

The result of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was as follows:

"Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all." Acts 2:41 (NLT)

*"And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved."
- Acts 2:47 (NLT)*

The promise of the baptism in the Spirit is specifically tied to the mission that Jesus gave to His disciples: to share the good news of Jesus throughout the world so that there would be a worldwide harvest of people who, by coming to faith in Christ would become children of God and citizens in the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit has been poured out so we can bring in a harvest of people into the house and family of God!

Pentecost Sunday is a time to remember two very important truths.

1. Our God is the "Lord of the Harvest." Our God is not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. When he didn't take the time to eat because he was too busy reaching out to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, his reason was essentially, "the harvest is ripe now and reaping this harvest is more important to me than food itself."

If we are Christians – people who have been united with Christ – then we must be committed to reaping this "people harvest." The church must be committed to multiplying because God wants His house to be filled.

2. God's Work Must be Done in His Power.

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The second vital truth that Pentecost proclaims to us is that we cannot do God's work in our own power and strength. Words that are not accompanied by the power and demonstration of the Spirit will not result in the hearer being converted to Christ. This doesn't mean that everyone will believe when the power of the Spirit works in us. In Acts many people rejected the gospel, but many others believed and their belief was so profound that it led to genuine repentance and devotion to Christ. When we live filled with the Holy Spirit our lives will influence others to trust in Christ and follow Christ.

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Jesus sends the Holy Spirit (John 16:7; John 1:33; Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16)

The Holy Spirit is “the empowering presence of God for living the life of God in the present.” Gordon Fee in GEP pg. 898

Since the goal of Jesus atoning work on the cross was to remake us in his image and bring us to final glory, we needed the Holy Spirit to give us life. Without the Spirit all we have is a positional transformation, but not a practical and personal transformation. The Spirit signifies “change”. The Spirit is essential to us becoming like our Father and living lives that bear witness to the reality of Jesus.

Crucifixion – My sins are gone. I am forgiven and made righteous.

Resurrection – I have life. Death is defeated

1. God's people would from this time forward be identified by the presence of the Holy Spirit in them and among them. We can't be the people of God without the enabling power of the Spirit of God.

In order to be His witnesses, we need the Spirit's power to accompany our proclamation, but we also need the Spirit to empower us to live as credible witnesses. Not just our words, but our whole life ought to give evidence of the truth that Jesus is the Savior and Lord of all.

2. The outpouring of the Spirit is the fulfillment of the OT prophetic hope that the presence of God would return to the people of God. As Ezekiel described it, dead bones would one day live again.

3. The church is a church for all people! Not for all lifestyles! His people are comprised of Jew and non-Jews of every stripe. Jesus atoning death for sin was an atoning death for the sins of all people, irrespective of social status, ethnicity, family heritage.

Having said that, the church is a community that is open to all regardless of race, class, nationality. The church is diverse community that is unified around belief in the saving work of Christ and His lordship over all creation. Because Jesus is what unifies us, that means that anyone who becomes a member of this community of Jesus followers must be willing to submit himself/herself to the will of Christ. For

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this reason, the church is not diverse in respect to what we believe and how we behave. We are unified in our desire to flee from sin and pursue righteousness (1 Corinthians 10:14, 1 Timothy 6:9-11; 2 Timothy 2:22) so the church is not a diverse community in respect to its view and attitude towards sin, evil, and injustice. Just because there are certain prerequisites to becoming a member of the body of Christ, that does not prevent us from loving all people.

4. The Holy Spirit comes from outside of us, not within us