

Sermon – June 5, 2022
“And I will pour out my Spirit”
The Rev. John C. Wright



Text: Acts 2:1-21

Pray with me: Father, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Come, Holy Spirit, come, visit, fill our hearts anew, and anoint the sharing of these words. Make them a blessing for your people that leads to life eternal and fruitful labor as we tarry here on this mission field. Lord, come and astonish us with your word this day. Amen

Good morning, everyone. Happy Pentecost! In the Old Testament, Pentecost was the time when the first fruits, the first bundles from the barley harvest, were brought into the temple to celebrate God’s provision. It was also the day when the Law, or Torah was given to Israel on Mount Sinai during the Exodus from Egypt. The Law was written on stone, given by God as the people, full of fear, looked up at the top of the mountain covered in fire and smoke and heard the sound of God speaking in a thundering voice. Even Moses is said to have trembled in fear at the sight. We know from Peter’s sermon that it is the third hour of the morning on this Pentecost day, 9 a.m. This is the first hour of prayer in the temple as they follow the hours of prayer that Daniel practiced, praying at nine, three and six, so the disciples are all present and are in prayer. The third hour is also the hour when Jesus was put on the cross. And now on the day of Pentecost, the third hour becomes the hour of the arrival of the Holy Spirit. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was resurrected on the third day, ascended to heaven after appearing to his disciples for forty days, and ten days later, Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to be poured out on all

flesh. Only Jesus' final return in power remains. We are living now in the age of the Holy Spirit as we await Jesus' final return.

Notice how the Holy Spirit comes with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, visible flames of fire, and spoken or breathed out words that recall the mighty acts of God. There is the wind sound for the ears, fire for our eyes, and words spoken as a result of the Spirit's arrival. The arrival of the Holy Spirit is not a hidden event that occurs in some unknown upper room in Jerusalem. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit begins in the temple onto the 120 disciples of Jesus who are gathered there waiting for Jesus' promised Advocate to arrive. As they wait, they are praising God in joy. Unlike the resurrection appearances of Jesus, this event is witnessed not only by the disciples, but by devout Jews from all of the world. Those who are gathered hear the mighty acts of God proclaimed in their own native tongues. What God confused at Babel is now undone so that the Gospel may be proclaimed in all tongues. Humanity, which once reached up in pride to become God, has been made new by God humbly coming to earth.

The gathered witnesses have the same question, "What does this mean?" They hear the mighty acts of God spoken in their heart languages but they do not understand what is happening. In answer to their question, Peter, who is standing with the eleven, raises his voice and in the power of the Holy Spirit, tells those gathered what these strange things mean. Peter reminds them of the prophecy given through the prophet Joel. God revealed through Joel that in the last days God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh—male and female, old and young, servant and master. All will receive the Holy Spirit and prophesy before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. The signs these devout Jews witness on Pentecost identify the arrival of the time when everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is the beginning of true revival, a time when all of those present are made aware of the immediate overwhelming presence of God. This is the revival we seek in our day, in this place where we are called into Jesus' mission. The revival that started on the first Pentecost with the Holy Spirit has never stopped, but continues on, moving outward from Jerusalem to the ends of the world. At times and in places the revival fires burn low, but in other places they yet rage unchecked. And it is for a renewal of this revival here in this place that we pray for a great awakening to occur among us.

Okay, the arrival of the Holy Spirit was 2000+ years ago. What does this mean to us today? To put Pentecost's meaning into today's setting, I would first change the question asked by these devout Jews to several questions: "What does the outpouring of the Holy Spirit mean to

us today? Anything? Is there a Holy Spirit? Has he been poured out on us? Is the Holy Spirit still being poured out on all people?" Let me answer these questions this way. There is a Holy Spirit, and He has been and is being poured out on us and all people as hearts are open. And, the presence of the Holy Spirit among us means that we are enabled to carry out Jesus' mission right here, right now. My answers to these questions bring more questions to mind such as, "How do we experience the Holy Spirit? What will we see and hear and speak if we receive the Holy Spirit? Will we be given tongues? Will there be fire?" First, let me encourage us not to get lost discussing manifestations that accompany the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can and will manifest in any way He pleases in our lives to draw us closer to Jesus and Jesus' relationship with the Father. The endpoint is not the manifestation but the Holy Spirit filling us and empowering us to speak to those who do not know Jesus, bringing scripture to mind and teaching us about Jesus. Our focus for encountering the Holy Spirit is to become open to the Spirit's movement in our lives, to learn the gifts and fruit of the Spirit found in our Bibles, and to expect those gifts and fruit to be given to the body of Christ when we are open to them. In whatever manner the Holy Spirit manifests himself in our lives, we can have assurance that what we have experienced is the Holy Spirit if afterward we discover in our hearts a new hunger to know Jesus and to share him with others. Don't necessarily expect to be called to be a pastor or missionary sent to Russia or Iraq or North Korea as we experience the Holy Spirit. That is possible, but what we should expect to find as we are filled with the Spirit is a person placed on our heart that we know right here, right now or that the Holy Spirit will lead us to in this place with whom we are to share the Gospel through the love placed in our heart. If the Holy Spirit leads us to other places, then we will be enabled by the Spirit to work there, but expect the Holy Spirit to use each of us in this place to bring another person into the Kingdom of God, to be enabled to join Jesus in his mission right here, right now. With the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, humanity entered into the beginning of the last days and we are now awaiting the coming of Jesus or the Day of the Lord. Between these events, the arrival of the Holy Spirit and judgment, there is a long day of work for us in the power of the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel throughout the world. Our job is to be open to the Holy Spirit in this place and follow his leadership to those we are to share the Gospel with so that "all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

When we pray and ask to receive the Holy Spirit, we should be open to manifestations of the Spirit such as speaking in tongues, being overcome with the Spirit, receiving words of

prophecy or words of knowledge for others, and other manifestations. But, let me suggest that what we most likely will receive as a body of Christ when we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit is what J.D. Walt calls a “demonstration of the power of Jesus.” For those following J.D. Walt’s daily devotions from Seedbed, a demonstration of the power of Jesus will be a familiar idea. For those not following the daily text, let me encourage us to go to Seedbed.com and sign up. The current daily devotion series is about experiencing the Holy Spirit and will be a valuable resource as we move through the season of Pentecost. What a “demonstration of Jesus’ power” means is that when we gather as the body of Christ and we are worshiping and praising God, we should also all pay attention to what comes into our thoughts, especially if it is something that we don’t normally think about and it is about peoples’ needs. As we worship and ask the Holy Spirit to come, we need to listen carefully for impressions we are given about people and their needs, and be willing to share them with the congregation or at least with your pastor. We should strive to grow together into a body of Christ who willingly pray over revealed needs with the expectation that Jesus will demonstrate his power by meeting those needs among us. If we are worshiping and one of us gets one of these impressions, then we should risk coming forward during the closing hymn and share them with me and I will open a time of prayer before we end the service around that need. Don’t be afraid to be wrong; be willing to take the risk. It is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Pentecost signals that believers have a new power to continue Jesus’ ministry, teaching, and sharing the good news and healing.

During the season of Pentecost, which lasts until September fifth, I am asking each of us to take a few minutes daily and pray a simple, very old prayer: “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.” Pray that prayer, or if all we can remember is “Come, Holy Spirit,” that is acceptable. After we pray that prayer, sit a while in silence and listen. It may take weeks before we get a response, but keep praying and listening. And then when we hear and receive an impression, let us be like Peter and stand up in the power of the Holy Spirit, raise our voice, follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, share what we have received, and act on those impressions. During Pentecost and always I will remind us to bring the gifts we have received forward to share what we hear from Jesus in our times of listening and pray in accordance with those gifts. I think the best sermon we will ever experience is when we as a congregation, a body of Christ, become open to the Holy Spirit and receive the gift of a

demonstration of the power of Jesus. So, take the challenge, begin to pray the prayer, listen, and then act as we are led.

Pray with me: Jesus, send the power from above to clothe us. Come, Holy Spirit, come. Awaken us with the sound of a mighty wind. Refine us with fire that we might be a people unified in the steadfast love of God through our Savior Jesus Christ. Come, Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Amen.

Benediction

A Prayer to the Holy Spirit, written by St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430)

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
That I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
To defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
That I always may be holy.