

This Sunday, we are observing Pentecost Sunday. It is the day that we remember the coming of the promised Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus. As Jesus promised, He has not left us alone, but has come to us in the person of this Holy Spirit to be with us and empower us to be His witnesses in this world. **Why do we remember and celebrate this day?** I wonder if our minds and hearts have been captivated by this event. **Who is this Holy Spirit? What does it mean** to us that the Spirit has come to us? **What evidence** should we see of the presence of the Spirit in our lives?

After Jesus rose from the dead, He remained with His disciples for about 40 days. He was then taken up into heaven. Before He was taken up to heaven, He instructed His followers to **wait in Jerusalem** for the gift that His Father had promised to send them. He was referring to the gift of the Holy Spirit. So, they stayed together, waiting, and praying. After waiting for a period of about 10 days, the promised gift that Jesus talked about came upon them on the day of the Jewish feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was a Thanksgiving celebration of the harvest that God provided.

Acts 1 & 2 gives us the details of the story of Pentecost. Jesus' followers stayed together as Jesus instructed them and waited. There were about 120 of them. The 11 apostles were there, along with others who had followed Jesus. There were women present who had been followers of Jesus. And now we read that Jesus' siblings (brothers) were present. Luke calls them believers. These are people who had been followers of Jesus and who **believed** that He was the promised Savior. Luke tells us that they spent their time together, praying. While they were gathered together on the day of Pentecost, something strange happened. The video that we just showed tells us about what happened. Suddenly – there was a wind blowing; they saw flames of fire, that settled on **each** of them; They began to speak in other languages. We later learn that there were people gathered around them from many different countries and they each heard the message about Jesus in their own language. Those who had gathered who were watching all of this did not understand what was happening. They thought the disciples were drunk. **But Peter stands up to explain what they were seeing.**

He says that what was happening was **something that God had spoke many years before this.** He refers to a passage in the book of Joel. Joel was an Old Testament prophet. His book is included in the section of the Old Testament that we refer to as the Minor Prophets. They are not called minor because they were insignificant, but because their written works were smaller than the works of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. The ministry of the prophets was to act as God's spokesmen to the people of Israel. They would declare to the people that God was displeased with their acts of disobedience and rebellion. They would list the sins of the people – idolatry, immorality, oppression of the poor. In their preaching they announced that if the people did not repent and turn from their sins God was going to send judgment upon His people. The prophet Joel wrote about a devastating invasion of locusts was about to attack the land. The locusts destroyed crops and harvest. This invasion of locusts was an act of God's judgment on His people because of their sin. But Joel preached that if the people would repent and turn to the Lord, He would relent and spare them. The people did respond to Joel's preaching and turned to the Lord. In response to their repentance, God sent blessing.

**“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—
the great locust and the young locust,
the other locusts and the locust swarm²⁶—
my great army that I sent among you.**

**²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,
and you will praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has worked wonders for you;
never again will my people be shamed.**

**²⁷ Then you will know that I am in Israel,
that I am the LORD your God,
and that there is no other;
never again will my people be shamed.**

Joel then announced that not only would God forgive and bless His repentant children, at some point in the future, He would send another blessing – **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. God confirmed to them that He was not finished with them. They remained His blessed people.

Now, on the day of Pentecost, Peter sees that what was happening there in Jerusalem on that day was the fulfillment of God's plan. When Joel wrote about the coming of the Spirit, he may have seen it taking place in the near future, after the deliverance from the locusts. But in actuality, what he saw was further on in history.

As Peter explains to the onlookers who are watching the disciples, He quotes directly from Joel's prophecy. As Joel wrote about the coming of the Spirit, He makes **some important points** that helps us understand this event that we observe this day.

All People: Joel first of all emphasizes that the gift of the Spirit is for all people. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was given to specific individuals who had a specific task to perform in the nation – kings for example; leaders (Moses); But now the promised gift is for all people. The Jewish people may not have fully understood the significance of this inclusionary statement. They would have still seen it as limited to their own people – Jews. However as the story of the growth of the Church unfolds in the book of Acts, we learn that ALL people now includes non-Jewish people. What Joel foresees in his prophecy includes us who are not Jewish. The Church must guard against any move to determine that certain people – ethnic groups, races, categories of sinners – are beyond God's reach.

Not Restrictive. Joel's prophecy makes it clear that when the gift of the Spirit came, He would come without restrictions –

- **Sons and daughters** – no gender distinctions;
- **Old and young** – no age distinctions
- **All classes of people** – servants and masters; one of the marks of the early Church was that the Church was made up of people from all class groups; masters and their servants became brothers and sisters. There should be no hint of separation among those who believe in Jesus.

Empowered for a Purpose – We must not miss the fact that God gives the Spirit to equip for ministry. Sometimes I think that we understand that **the Spirit is a mystical presence to comfort us and to be with us in our loneliness**. But the Holy Spirit is given to enable us to be involved in God's work. **Sons and daughters will prophesy**. To prophesy is to announce the word of God. We are equipped to be able to proclaim. **Old Men, dream dreams. Young men, see visions**. To be captivated by God's vision for the world and to share that. If you are a believer in Jesus, God has poured out His Spirit into your life. And He has **done that for a purpose**. So that you will be actively involved in His work.

To demonstrate His Power (vs 30). God has given the Holy Spirit to reveal His power to the world. As the early Church grew and expanded, the Holy Spirit worked – lame were healed; Dead were raised; Miracles occurred, and as a result many people came to faith in Jesus. I believe that if we have been empowered by His Spirit, we ought to expect to see God performing wonders in the world as He did in the days of the Church in the book of Acts.

An awareness of the coming day of the Lord. One of the results of the coming of the Spirit is that believers would be convinced that history is moving toward a day when God will judge the world. The awareness of that will compel us to reach out to those who are lost and tell them **Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved from that day of God's judgment**.

CONCLUSIONS: We are grateful to God that He has not abandoned us to fend for ourselves in this world. He has come to be with us. He has come to be in us. He has come to overpower our will so that we will accomplish His will. If you are a follower of Jesus today, where do you see evidence in your life of the Spirit's activity: How are you allowing the Holy Spirit to use you to bring the good news to others. The good news that **Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved?**