

**MT. ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
 Festival of Pentecost  
 6/9/19  
 Acts 2:1-21  
**FILLED TO OVERFLOWING**  
 Pastor Scott Bergemann

The story is told of a man who went to Mexico to give a lecture. And, even though he didn't speak much Spanish, he still wanted to greet his audience in their native tongue. He knew how to say, "*Good Evening*," in Spanish, but had no idea how to say, "*Ladies & gentlemen*." And so, instead of simply asking someone who knew, he went out to the lobby by the restrooms and found the two words that he thought were appropriate. When the time came to begin, the man proudly stood up and said in Spanish. "*Good evening, ladies and gentlemen*." But the

people just looked at him, confused. So, he tried again. "*Good evening, ladies and gentlemen*." After a brief pause, someone started to chuckle. Soon others began to laugh out loud. Within moments the entire crowd was roaring in laughter because what he said was, "*Good evening, bathrooms and broom closets!*"

We are always impressed when we hear that someone can speak in more than one language, because it's not a simple thing. It takes time, effort and practice. You have to get beyond the way that your language works and think about speech in an entirely new way. And even after you learn all the vocabulary and all the rules, you still don't yet have it down, because you don't have the experience of actually speaking it. And without it, how easily the communication can get all messed up.

That is perhaps the most remarkable thing about Pentecost. Even more than the sound of the rushing wind, even more than the tongues of fire resting on the disciples' heads. These uneducated and inexperienced disciples were speaking in different languages as though they had been talking that way all their lives. It was as though the Holy Spirit had flipped a switch in each one of them from single to multi-language setting, and it worked without any kind of glitch in their mainframes. And these now master linguists began declaring the wonders of God.

This was not an everyday occurrence. This was not normal to hear Galileans speaking the language of places they had never been. This was an act of God. And the people around them noticed. So they asked the age-old question, "What does this mean?"

Peter had an answer for them. **"...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.'**" These men were not filled with alcohol. They were filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit. The Father had poured out the Spirit on his disciples, so that they could do the work of the church, prophesying in His name.

But now it's time for us to ask, "What does this mean, *for us*?" Because while the story of Pentecost is wonderful and cool to hear, at first glance, it does seem to only be benefiting those who were there on that day. What difference does this day really make for us?

God through the prophet Joel is telling us what will happen **"in the last days."** The prophecy was not only about this one day, much more than that. The last days are the days before Judgment Day. When's that going to be? No one knows. So all the days from Pentecost until now and from now until the end of days, these are the last days. This means that throughout the past 2000 years God has and will continue to pour out his Holy Spirit on his people. Let me say that another way. God has been and will continue to be pouring out his Spirit upon us.

But if this is what God says, has promised and has done, then why aren't we suddenly speaking in tongues? Why aren't there little bits of flame coming off those candles and resting on our heads? Why don't we get to see some audible and visible evidence of the Holy Spirit being in us? Because that would be nice, wouldn't it? Can you imagine what our services would be like if this kind of stuff happened all the time? Wouldn't that draw a crowd? Why isn't God still doing this today?

Pentecost was something unique. In this most remarkable event God was making it clear that the Holy Spirit had come, just as Jesus had promised. And with the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church was born. By gifting the tongues to the disciples he showed that this was no longer a one nation religion, it was for the whole world. And now his Word was spreading like fire literally because of it. With this final bit of preparation done, they were now ready for the work of God's kingdom. What he had given was enough. Now it was time for believers to live by faith and not by sight.

But for those of you who still may be thinking that more miraculous signs are needed, remember the Exodus. There God provided a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night and the miraculous daily gift of manna. But still the Israelites again and again fell into sin and idolatry. They grumbled about how God was treating them and eventually even complained about their miracle manna. Everywhere they looked they had miraculous signs taking place, but it quickly became nothing to them, just everyday, ordinary stuff.

Clearly God has chosen a better way. He has given us some amazing signs of his presence, His Word and Sacraments. He has given us 1005 pages front and back of his words and promises, and the ability to read it, and the faith to believe and understand it. Instead of preachers who speak in new tongues, God has provided everything to be translated in our tongue, and preachers who speak our

language. He has given us Baptism to witness the Holy Spirit being poured out on us. He has given us the Lord's Supper to receive the body and blood of Christ. How is this any less amazing than what happened at Pentecost? It may seem so to our eyes and ears, but to our souls, the effects are the same. Life giving faith and God's presence among us.

Yet we don't always see it that way, do we? We don't recognize the miracles that have happened in us. We even neglect the blessings that God has brought to us. In Baptism we were reborn, brought out of the death of sin! But how often do we bother to remember that it happened, much less thank God that it did? Through baptism God shows how much he values our life, by bringing us into his fold and saving us for eternity. But how much do we value our life? How much do we treasure our life, as we look at the lives of others and say I want that life. I want what they have. I don't have much. I wish I had more. My life and the baptism that God has poured out on it doesn't amount to much. And the miracle of Pentecost is slowly taken away from us with the devil's goal of the Spirit not being with us forever in hell.

Through the Word our sinful nature gets crushed and holy living gets built up. But how often do we actually pick that book up on a daily basis so that it can do just that? How much do we value the Word, over and above our worry about money, future, family, work, life, so that we don't have time for the Word, through which the Holy Counselor works in us to stop our worry and put our trust in God and bring peace. We don't value the Word and so the miracle of Pentecost slowly taken away from us along with the Spirit, and his fire.

In Holy Communion we receive the blood of salvation and the bread of life. Yet how many times have we not truly prepared ourselves to receive it as God asks, or thought nothing of it to miss when it was offered?

Baptism, Life through it, and the Word, if we are not filling our lives with these things, then we seek other thing to be filled up with. Things that take us away from that which saves us. Things that no matter how good they may appear, destroy our souls and lives. Like the Israelites in the desert we too have abused these miraculous gifts. We know what we deserve.

But in the oddity of all oddities, these gifts that we treat with contempt are the very same gifts that God uses to wash that contempt away. And he does so in a most personal way. You yourself can pick up the Bible and read, "**God so loved the world...Whoever believes and is baptized...All who call on the name of the Lord...It is by grace...These are written that you may...Blessed are those who have not seen and...**" and you know that he's talking about you. Yes, the Holy Spirit has caused you to believe and know that this is the truth: Jesus Christ died to save you. This is your Pentecost that has been freely given to you! Whenever you witness a Baptism taking place you can remember your own and think, "I am a redeemed child of God and I have been cleansed of all my transgressions." And as you receive the Holy Meal of the body and blood of your Savior, you partake of it individually, remembering Jesus' words, "**This is my body, given for you...this is my blood poured out for you.**"

Now you see the lives of others, and you are not jealous of them. For you have been filled to overflowing. You have all you need and you want them to have what you have. Instead of taking you want to give. Because that's what we do with what God has given to us. And on the other side of the coin we want to receive. We want to receive God's Word and Sacraments because through these things we receive the peace and love of God, that wipe away all our worries and fears. For we have been filled to overflowing.

And this is not all. For every time these gifts are employed the words of Joel are fulfilled once again. "**I will pour out my Spirit on all people... Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.**" You may not be able to speak another language. You certainly cannot balance fire upon your head. But you have the Holy Spirit inside you. You have been filled to overflowing. I know that it doesn't always feel like that. I know that there are times when we wonder if the Spirit's fire is there at all. But you know that this is what happens, questions begin to appear, the more that you look inward inside of yourself. But the more you look to Christ and his cross, to his words and promises, 1005 pages worth of them, the more He fills you to overflowing. The more you know that heaven is your home and the more you want to share the good news with others.

So our Pentecost continues. Let us declare the wonders of God! This Saturday we have our block party. We are calling it a neighborhood BBQ! You are invited along with our entire neighborhood. There will be men, women, and children who do not know the love of God in this place. We will get to meet them and share with them all that God has given us. What a wonderful continuation of Pentecost! Let us tell them about Jesus, so that they may be filled.

We need not be afraid to do this. We need not be scared. For the power does not rest in us! The disciples didn't do Pentecost. God did Pentecost. The words do not come from us. Rather it all comes from above. God the Father is with us. God the Son stands beside us. And God the Holy Spirit, our Counselor, is within us. Filled to Overflowing! Amen.