

Worship at Home
June 5, 2022
Day of Pentecost
General Assembly Sunday



“The Spirit, the Word, and repentance”

God calls us to worship:

Responsive reading: Psalm 104:24-30 (pg. ...)

Hymn: #277 “On this assembled host”

We offer our prayers:

Prayer of Praise and Supplication (*please remain standing*):

Holy God,
from our scattered lives we gather to praise you,
for you are great and wonderful.
With joyful hearts, we celebrate the work of your Spirit.
At the dawn of creation, you sent your Spirit to bring life.
Over the centuries, your Spirit called your servants
to proclaim your love and justice.
Through the flames of Pentecost,
your Spirit gave birth to the church with energy and wonder.
Today, your Spirit is at work in the world,
bringing renewal and hope here and everywhere.
Transform us by your Spirit this
to become more faithful followers of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

Please be seated.

*If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)
Yet we know that nothing is able to separate us
from the love of God in Jesus Christ.
Let us, therefore, be free to confess our sins
before the God who is faithful and just. (1 John 1:9)*

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

God of mercy;

**As we gather to celebrate your gift of love
we recall the times when we forget you
and are divided one from the other.**

**How often our thoughts, our words, and our actions
have betrayed the goodness you have shown to us.**

Forgive us.

Mend what is broken.

Heal the wounded relationships

that separate us from you,

from one another,

and which leave us divided within ourselves;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God offers the assurance of grace:

We offer our lives and resources:

Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you'd prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew's), or Howard McKellar (Knox)

God speaks to us:

Hymn: #505 "O Christ, the Word incarnate"

Readings: Acts 2:1-39 (pg. ...)

The Holy Spirit, the Word, and Repentance

1. You don't have to be a follower of Jesus very long before you begin to recognize the remarkable significance of the Day of Pentecost for the Christian church. This is the day that is celebrated as the birthday of the church.

On this day nearly 2,000 years ago, while the disciples waited in Jerusalem as per Jesus' instructions, they were overcome by the Holy Spirit.

A sound like the rush of a violent wind filled the house in which they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

The very first thing the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to do, was to speak about God, God's kingdom, and about Jesus of Nazareth – who was crucified yet is risen from the dead – is the Son of God, the Messiah through whom God is bringing His government to bear on earthly affairs.

The Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to testify. To tell others what they knew to be true of Jesus.

The miracle of this event was that everyone who heard them, heard what they were saying *in their own language*.

You see, on that day, Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims from all over the Mediterranean world.

As much as Christians like to claim the festival of Pentecost as the birthday of the church, and we're not wrong in doing so; nevertheless, the festival long predates the Christian church.

Pentecost was one of three pilgrimage festivals for the Jewish community. By the time of Jesus, Pentecost had become a celebration of God's giving the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The faithful would travel to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the beginning of the covenant, the beginning of the Holy Nation of Israel. Passover celebrates their freedom from slavery and thus their freedom to worship Yahweh alone, and Pentecost celebrates God's gracious gift of the law whereby the newly liberated people can now be shaped into a cohesive nation that bears witness to God by its living according to God's holy teachings. Pentecost was thus a festival of remembrance and

renewal. In praising God for the law, they renew their vows to God by renewing their obedience to the laws of the covenant.

Jerusalem was full of pilgrims returning to God by returning to the words of the covenant.

And regardless of their country of origin, regardless of their own languages, each pilgrim heard the disciples speaking about Jesus as the resurrected king of God's kingdom, *in their own language*.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit that day gave the disciples the ability to bear witness to Jesus using words and languages that everyone could understand!

2. Evangelism is nothing more – or less – than clearly communicating the good news that there is a God who creates all that exists; that He is real, good, and able; that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah who holds all dominion, power, and glory; and that in fellowship with Him there is peace, healing, reconciliation, and restoration.

Evangelism is nothing more – or less – than communicating this good news in ways that people can understand so that, in understanding, they come to believe as well.

On that day of Pentecost nearly 2,000 years ago, the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to do just that.

3. As the story's told, although many people were amazed at what was happening, there were, as there always is, skeptics in the crowd.

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."¹

Peter responded to the skeptics by explaining how this event is the completion of Joel's prophecy about the "Day of the Lord."

¹ Acts 2:12-13

Three centuries earlier, Joel preached about the Day of the Lord. This was understood as a period of time, an age, during which, with the arrival of his Anointed One, or, Messiah, God would directly intervene in human history to reorder affairs on earth as they are in heaven. For all who turned to Him, worshiping Him alone as God and obeying His teachings, this day would be one of great blessing as God re-established the Garden of Eden and populated it with His holy nation.

Peter preached that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah who would inaugurate the Day of the Lord, and that the events of that day of Pentecost are the evidence that this has already happened.

According to the prophet Joel, one of the signs that the Day of the Lord had begun would be a particular outpouring of the Holy Spirit by which those who were thus empowered would see visions, dream dreams, and *would be enabled to prophecy*. The Holy Spirit would enable the citizens of the Holy Nation to speak of the grace, mercy, power, and judgement of God. When the Day of the Lord had begun, the Spirit of God would enable people to speak about the Kingdom of God in ways that everyone could understand.

This, interpreted Peter, is what was happening on that day of Pentecost.

With the evidence of the disciples speaking in languages that everyone could understand, following upon the sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah, this day of Pentecost nearly 2,000 years ago marked the beginning – not merely of Israel nor solely of the church – of the Day of the Lord!

4. If Peter correctly interpreted the scriptures and the events of the day (and we are left to trust that he did): if the Day of the Lord began 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem, and God is now intervening in human history to restore the good order of His creation; if Jesus is the Messiah who, through his sacrifice, God has forgiven sin; if by his resurrection God has begun the work of restoration; if by the Holy Spirit God empowers the church to be part of His Holy Nation and clearly bear witness to this reality, What should we do?

Peter's answer was clear:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...²

Have you ever been listening to a sermon, or a speech, or a lecture in which the speaker was repeating what you already know and encouraging you to do what you're already doing?

It can be kind of frustrating, can't it? Maybe boring?

If you've been a disciple of Jesus for many years, baptized in his name years ago – maybe even as an infant, Peter's response might sound redundant. Your sins have been forgiven and you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit!

“Repent and be baptized and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

“I've already done that! What now?!?”

We need to recognize that Peter was speaking specifically to those who were not Christian. He was speaking to those who had not yet accepted that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Son of God. He was speaking to those who had not yet been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

We are now living in the consequence of that day of Pentecost. The church that began 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem with a few disciples and 3,000 converts, has spread over much of the globe. If you're listening to this, chances are that you are already a follower of Jesus.

So, in light of what we have heard thus far, what should *Christians* do in response?

The first implication I want to draw out is that for those who are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, who have lived many years of Christian discipleship, and who habitually call on the name of the Lord, take heart: your faith is not in vain! You are among those who can say with the apostle Paul in the words he wrote to his young protégé Timothy:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of

² Acts 2:38

*righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*³

Let the Holy Spirit give you a pat on the back!

The second implication, however, has to do with the truth that whenever we encounter the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word of the covenants, we are seldom – if ever – left to kick back and wait out the clock!

A sign that we are truly receptive to the Holy Spirit's presence and power is that the sons and daughters of God will be moving and learning and growing; prophesying; working and witnessing wonders and signs; dreaming dreams and seeing visions.

If you are a baptized disciple of Christ, you don't need to be baptized again!

However, living in the power of the Holy Spirit does involve living repentance.

You've probably seen pictures of the intricate knot-like designs associated with the Celtic people. If you begin at a point on the line and trace it, your finger will travel to the right, to the left, high above, far below, come near, and soar away, but always, eventually, you will return to the starting point. To the centre.

The knot work is a metaphor for living long-term in the power of the Holy Spirit. We set out each morning, shouldering our packs of discipleship and eager to be faithful witnesses of God in whatever situation comes our way. Throughout the day we wander, become forgetful, allow the pressures to pile up in our minds and lose the joy that is a gift of the Spirit.

Repentance is the life-long daily habit of tracing our wandering paths back to the One in whom life has its beginning, its ending, and its fullness.

³ 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Repentance is the holy habit that heightens our awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence and power within us, despite what's going on outside of us, by which we can live in obedience to the Word of the covenant and thus bear witness to the Messiah clearly and convincingly. It's about returning to the covenant that unites the Spirit-aware family of God. It's about remembering to listen in prayer and praise for the Spirit who still speaks through the written Scriptures to convince our hearts and minds of appropriate actions.

For nearly 2,000 years devout followers of Jesus have been returning to Pentecost, returning to the Holy Spirit, returning to the Words of the covenant, returning to renew their commitment to call on the name of the Lord.

And, for nearly 2,000 years, from his throne room in heaven, the Messiah has been working with his church in the mystery of the Holy Spirit, to renew vision, to give the church the ability to proclaim His kingdom clearly and confidently, and has been confirming the church's message with signs of healing, hope, and holiness.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
amen!

We respond in prayers of thanksgiving and intercession:

Wind of the Spirit,
blow through us on this day of Pentecost and renew our faith.
Re-awaken our love for God
and strengthen our fellowship after the challenges of the pandemic.
Let your flames warm our hearts with trust in Jesus Christ
and hope for the future he will create.
Dare us to do great things in his name.
Wind of the Spirit,
Enliven us and renew our faith.

Wind of the Spirit,
blow through us and renew our energy
to serve you in Christ's Church.
Open our eyes to recognize needs for ministry and mission in changing times.
Open our hearts to welcome newcomers and meet those we don't yet know.
Open our hands to share in the tasks that need doing,
and open our lips in prayer and praise.
Wind of the Spirit,
Enliven us and renew our energy.

Wind of the Spirit,
blow through us and give us new understanding
for those whose lives seem so different from ours,
and for those facing situations we've never encountered.
Hold a brief silence.

For those with whom we've disagreed
and for those whose values challenge our expectations.
Hold a brief silence

For problems and challenges we face at home or at work
and for the complex issues we face in your world.
Hold a brief silence.

Wind of the Spirit,
Enliven us and give us new understanding.

Wind of the Spirit,
blow through us and bring us healing and peace
For all who face pain or illness, discouragement or disappointment.
Hold a brief silence

Bring healing for all who know sorrow, sadness or grief
Hold a brief silence

Bring healing for those who face stress and pressure

Hold a brief silence

Bring healing for places in the world facing conflict
and for the creation struggling for life itself

Hold a brief silence

Wind of the Spirit,

Enliven us and bring healing and peace.

Wind of the Spirit,

Blow through us and bring us the wisdom and compassion we see in Christ Jesus.

Blow through us and equip us to serve the world you love in his name.

Blow through the General Assembly meeting this week
and inspire the debates and decisions of the commissioners.

Blow through our whole church and refresh us as your faithful people
as together we say the words Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with God's blessing:

Hymn: #642 "O Master, let me walk with thee"

Blessing: