

## WELCOME 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 – Pentecost '20 A

Acts 2:1-21

Good morning! Welcome back to the On-line well of Living Water! It's great we can be together in this way...in this time when we can't be together. I'm glad you're here AND I pray that when we **ARE** back together...if you've never been with us before except on livestream...you'll pop in & hang out with us in person. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups. Those are a great way to stay in touch & experience God's Word together!

*As we move into this week...Don't Forget the Bacon!* A wonderfully cute children's book about a little boy who desperately tries to memorize his mum's shopping list as he & his dog walk to the shop. But there's so much to see & so many distractions the list gets jumbled & confused...and by the time he has it straight...he forgets the **BACON!**

He forgets the main point of the trip to the shop...the one thing his mum said don't forget... the **BACON!**...he forgets.

Business consultants always tell their clients: Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing. Never lose sight of what is your business' chief product, main strength, market advantage...Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing. *Don't Forget the Bacon!*

The very last thing Jesus said to his disciples was just that: Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing. *Don't Forget the Bacon!*

Luke, who records the Pentecost account we'll read today, notes Jesus says: "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, & to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 -- telling people about me everywhere – that's the bacon/main thing

Today is Pentecost when Jesus kept his promise to send the Holy Spirit to take up residence <sup>w/in</sup> us now & forever so that his presence <sup>w/in</sup> us can shape/transform everything about us...so that the world can see him working <sup>w/in</sup> us revealing his rule over all things...present <sup>w/in</sup> us powerfully in every moment of our lives so that we live propelled into each day by God's unshakable love for us & his life & grace given to us making that grace – love – life evident/shared in all we do.

The gift of the Spirit was for one thing...and the by-standers got it instantly: "...we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!" The Spirit comes so that you & I can do one thing: speak about what God has done – tell the great news of Jesus' life/death/rez that gives us new life in a living hope where sin is forgiven, hell overthrown & death defeated.

Today is Pentecost; the day the Spirit bursts into the lives of the followers of Jesus, so we can **MOVE TOGETHER: IN THE SPIRIT** into our corner of the world telling what God has done in Jesus to bring his gift of life-transforming grace so that all people would encounter, know & trust that good news.

We'll explore & experience that together today... Let's pray...and then we'll get stuck into it.

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Whirlwind Spirit of God, Roar through our failings & fears. Shake the foundations of our ill-placed securities. Sweep away the cobwebs of our apathy. Blow down the walls that separate us one from another. Then into all our empty spaces, breathe courage to challenge injustice, call us to the urgency of your mission, bring passion to our living, make us bold to speak your word to grow & mobilize your church. Let your gentle breeze & still small voice become in us today a mighty wind & loud proclamation. Make Easter & Pentecost pour from us today so the world may see you risen & reigning Lord of all! Through Jesus Christ we pray... Amen!*

### FAITH CHAT:

1. Where did you see evidence of God at work in the world this week?
2. How is the Spirit working in you now? From your perspective, how is the Spirit working in Living Water?
3. What do you think is a great way to celebrate Pentecost...the sending of the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus?

**BIBLES**

## PENTECOST '20 A – MOVE TOGETHER: IN THE SPIRIT

As many of you know...I grew up in & around the church. I've been following Jesus on & off now for 58 years. As a child my family was part of a fairly big church in Houston, TX...I always loved the celebration Sundays: C-mas, Easter & especially...Pentecost. I loved Pentecost. Our music director always had a brass group on Pentecost & so it was loud & big & everybody wore red & the decorations were all red & we would read the Acts 2 lesson in 3 or 4 languages besides English...So we got the full dramatic theatrical sense of the wind & the fire & the diverse languages. Now...no one ever broke into speaking in tongues...that wasn't our experience then & it was a fair while before I ever encountered that...

And that's a good thing...because the day of Pentecost is not to be confused with being pentecostal. The languages that break out of the Xns on Pentecost are all human languages...not what we usually associate w/ visible expressions of the Spirit. You see...The point of what Philippa & I just read...*IS NOT* the mighty windstorm, the shaken house, the visible flames of fire & the multitude of languages that this group of Hebrew Christians had never spoken before...It's easy to get dazzled by the spectacle of this out-pouring of the Spirit – to get wrapped up in the drama of the experience of the Spirit...and then forget the bacon...To actually miss the point of Pentecost...to make the visible signs of the Spirit the main thing when those were never the main thing. What am I saying?

It's easy to get overwhelmed by the imagery...wind, fire, languages & their experience of the Holy Spirit, (and there are plenty of folks who spend a lot of energy trying to recreate that Pentecost moment...ecstasy of the Spirit) but those who experienced the Holy Spirit at Pentecost didn't dwell on it at all. Luke never talks about Pentecost again...never. We just spent 2 months reading the 1<sup>st</sup> of Peter's 2 letters to churches many of whom were birthed by this event & by the persecution that soon followed...*HE* never mentions his Pentecost experience ever again. Paul, a bit of a latecomer to the apostles, writes more about the Holy Spirit than anyone in the Bible, & *HE* never writes about this experience of the Spirit at Pentecost. I reckon he & the other apostles understood it wasn't the thing that mattered...not the main thing. In fact, nowhere else in the NT does *anyone* recount the events at Pentecost the way the OT re-tells the exodus experiences & the NT recounts the events of the crucifixion/resurrection of Jesus. Which means...?

What the Spirit wanted us to know, as Peter makes clear in his sermon here, is what God has done in & through the crucifixion & resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter does not tell the gathered bewildered mob how they now have to have this experience for themselves. He proclaims only what Christ has done for us, once for all for all of us. "...you nailed him to a cross & killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death & raised him back to life...God raised Jesus from the dead, & we are all witnesses of this. Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see & hear today. So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord & Messiah!" – Acts 2:23-24 & 32-33

Saviour & King – Defender & Ruler – God himself here for us...here with us...here dwelling within us.

The point of Pentecost is that the Holy Spirit brings the work of Christ *for them to them*. The Holy Spirit comes so that we will *NOT* focus on the Holy Spirit but on Jesus. The Spirit makes a grand entrance...It rests/settles on/abides <sup>w/in</sup> the followers of Jesus...They then, as the Spirit takes hold, point to/talk about/share what God has done in Jesus. The Spirit always & only ever points to Jesus...The Spirit always & only shapes our lives responsive to Jesus...shapes our character reflective of Jesus...leads us to trust that what Jesus has done in dying & rising is...for...us...for-ever.

Which is precisely what Jesus said the Spirit would do on the night he was betrayed/killed: *Jn 16:8-14 - When the Spirit comes, he will convict the world of its sin, & of God's righteousness, & of the coming judgment...He will glorify Me, because He will take what is Mine & declare it to you...*" The Spirit always & only ever points to Jesus...what God has done for you in him.

Let's not forget why all these devout Jews are in Jerusalem...In fact they've been there for about 2 months for 2 of the 3 major festivals of the Jewish faith: Passover & Pentecost. Passover, celebrates their freedom from slavery in Egypt (the Exodus) Pentecost, notes the giving of the Law to God's people during their journey from Egypt to the promised land God said he would give them as their very own so he could live <sup>w/</sup> them as their God...their sole source of life, hope & strength.

Pentecost is for those travelling worshippers a commemoration not just of the 10 Commandments but of the 603 *other* commands that culminate "*You must be holy because I, the Lord, am holy. I have set you apart from all other people to be my very own.*" – Lev 20:26 & their response to Moses/God, "*All of the commands of the Lord we will do.*" Except they don't. Moses returns to the top of the mountain & before long the people who've sworn their fidelity to God have built a calf idol & are dancing naked singing songs about other gods. They fail the demands of the law...especially the first command to have no other god...Well that's no surprise. Paul in Rom 5:20 says that when the law hits the human heart it points out how badly sin-infested we are (exposes our brokenness & sin...self-will self-investment) & then it in fact increases our opposition to doing what the law commands. We may want to do the right thing but we don't. We might want to avoid the wrong thing but we do it anyway. Rom 7.

But in Rom 8:3 Paul proclaims the good news: *The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.* That is why the life/death/rez of Jesus is good news...because all the religious doing in the world – at which we all fail miserably - is put to death in Jesus. Notice the magnificent contrast <sup>b/t</sup> the 2 Pentecosts...*“All of the commands of the Lord we will do.”* Except they don't. Here in vs 37 Peter finishes his sermon & they ask *“What then should we do?”* Peter says DON'T. DO. ANYTHING...He simply points to what is already theirs in Jesus & calls them to trust what Jesus has already done for them. Repentance. Baptism. Fix your hope on God. Those are not religious doings; they are the evidence that Holy Spirit has brought the work of Christ *for you to you...*and made you his own.

Peter must have had a smile on his face when he was able to say, “This promise that our people have been hanging out for for generations is now fulfilled so you can delight in it. This moment we thought would maybe never arrive is here now to show God's faithfulness despite our unfaithfulness.” That same promise...that same gift in Jesus is yours NOT because you've earned it or deserved it...but because Christ has fulfilled the Law by his perfect faithfulness & by his crucifixion he suffered the penalty for all our failure to be faithful & by his resurrection all sin is forgiven, all death is defeated & all evil is overcome & Christ's perfect righteousness/relationship <sup>w/</sup> the Father is now yours by your baptism into his death/rez.

The gift of the Spirit was for one thing...and the by-standers got it instantly: *“...we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!”* The Spirit comes so you & I can do one thing: speak about what God has done – tell the great news of Jesus' life/death/rez that gives us new life in a living hope where sin is forgiven, hell overthrown & death defeated. We who live by the Holy Spirit & experience Jesus' love/life have abundant hope to share. Look...our business is not to decide who gets a bus ticket to hell or elevator ride to heaven. Our business is to say to the people around us, “Jesus unlocks the grave. He's done it for me. He'd love to do it for you.” Our business is to say to folks we know, “Jesus wants to be a part of every minute of your existence so you know you're never alone – never cut off – never abandoned.” Our business is to take our hands & put them to work serving the needs of the people who cross our paths - day in & day out in the Name of Jesus. Pentecost is that great reminder that his mission, his goal was to bring God's powerful love, God's rule to bear on real human lives & real human circumstances. Jesus' mission was to bring people into a relationship with God the Father such that they lived in his presence & power & carried out his way of living here...“on earth as it is in heaven.”

The evidence of a Pentecost Church is not so much particular gifts or experiences, but the life, grace & service the Church brings to the world. We are filled with the Spirit not for our sakes, but for the sake of the world that God loves so dearly. — John van de Laar

And that is the greatest freedom we will ever experience. Because now, in Christ there's no condemnation...& that means there's no measuring my life against yours or my faith against anyone else's or my behavior against some religious scorecard. It means we're free to be faithful to our friends & our spouses & God. We're free to fail & fall over in a heap & trust his forgiveness & forgive ourselves. We're free for generosity & hospitality & honesty & compassion & to dispense with fakery & phoniness. We're free to sacrifice our desires for the sake of someone else. We're free to be the failures/frauds, hypocrites/halfhearted, sinners & saints that we are...& at the same time truly rejoice in the love Jesus will not withhold from us. We're free to hold on to his promises because they are life itself when everything around us is trying to snuff the life right out of us. Just a few:

- “The Son of Man came to seek & save the lost”
- “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- “I am the resurrection & the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live...”
- “Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, & I will raise that person at the last day.”
- “I am with you always to the end of the age.”

Jesus kept his promise to send the Holy Spirit to take up residence <sup>w/in</sup> us now & forever so that his presence <sup>w/in</sup> us can shape/transform everything about us...so that the world can see him working <sup>w/in</sup> us revealing his rule over all things... present <sup>w/in</sup> us powerfully in every moment of our lives so that we live propelled into each day by God's unshakable love for us & his life & grace given to us making that grace – love – life evident/shared in all we do.

Let's pray with that in mind...

Father God, you sent your Holy Spirit at Pentecost, filling the disciples with your resurrection life so they could boldly share the good news. Let the boldness of your Spirit transform us, the gentleness of your Spirit lead us, and the gifts of your Spirit equip us so that we too may powerfully and passionately proclaim & display Christ in this world.

Lord of the Harvest, You gave Your disciples the mandate to be Your witnesses around the world and empowered them with Your Holy Spirit & the good news of the gospel to accomplish this task. Today, we ask You to refocus our attention as we face a task unfinished & a city yet unknowing.

Father you give the breath of life so breathe on us again. Make our consciences tender to Your touch. We hunger for the life-changing power that Your Holy Spirit brings. May our lives display the fruit of Your Spirit & may the gifts of the Spirit that You have given us bless the church this city & reveal Your Kingdom on earth.

Remember us in your kingdom & teach us to pray...