

## Acts 2:1-21

Quite often, especially when people **first** start **reading** the Bible, or **hearing** Bible **stories**, they have the tendency to think that these events all happened “a **long, long** time ago, in a galaxy **far, far** away.” And I guess that’s really only **natural**, because there are many, many things which **distance** us from the events of the Bible. It’s true, they **did** take place **thousands** of miles away from us, and they **did** take place thousands of **years** ago. So, it’s hard for us to completely **picture** what the city of Jerusalem **looked** like and **sounded** like at the time when Jesus was living here on the earth. As a **result**, these Bible stories can be very **interesting** for people to read, but they don’t always seem to be **relevant** to their lives **today**. As we look at the events of **Pentecost** in our text today, I want us to be able to **see** those events **as they happened** on that very **special** Day of Pentecost. But in addition to that, I **also** want us to realize that the same kind of events **still occur** in our **world**, and in our daily **lives**. Just as the Holy Spirit spoke in a **magnificent** way so many years ago, **The Holy Spirit Still Speaks Today**.

I wonder how many of you realized before we got started today, that this Sunday is **Pentecost** Sunday. If you **didn’t**, I don’t want you to feel **bad** about it. Most people don’t **keep track** of those things. Oh, **Christmas** and **Easter**, that’s a different **story**, but **Pentecost** isn’t necessarily one of the holidays we **mark** on our calendars, and eagerly **anticipate**. That’s **not** the way it **used** to be, in fact, for the believers in **Old Testament** times, the day of **Pentecost** was one of the **big three** yearly festivals. The **other** two were the **Passover**, and the Feast of **Tabernacles**. Every faithful Jew was very much **aware** of the day of **Pentecost** - an event which took place **every year**, 50 days after the **Passover**. The LORD had established this festival as a day when His people would bring Him an **offering** from the **first fruits** of their harvest. It was a day of **thanksgiving** for all the **blessings** which the LORD had provided for them.

At the time of our **text**, the day of Pentecost had already been celebrated every year for over **1,000 years**. But it was going to take on a completely **new** and **special** meaning in the account recorded for us in Acts chapter 2. Our text tells us that all of Jesus’ **disciples** were gathered together in Jerusalem. This **wasn’t** just the 12 **apostles** whom Jesus had chosen, but rather, this was a group of about **120** men and women. The **question** is why were they all **there**? And the **answer** is that they were **waiting** - waiting for Jesus to fulfill His **promise** to send the Holy Spirit to them. They didn’t have to wait very **long**, but it must have **seemed** like a **lifetime** to them. It had only been **10 days** since Jesus had ascended into heaven, but those disciples had been sitting on pins and needles the whole time. They

realized that something **amazing** was going to happen to them - but they didn't know exactly **when** it would take place. And that made their **waiting** even more difficult.

There were three miraculous **signs** which occurred on the day of Pentecost - signs which made it **obvious** that Jesus was fulfilling His promise to fill them with the Holy Spirit. The **first** sign was something that they **heard**. Luke describes it as a sound like the rushing of a violent **wind**. If you've ever been in the middle of a **blizzard**, or perhaps have witnessed a **tornado**, you know how **loud** the howling of the wind can be. Now imagine **hearing** that tremendous sound, but at the same time realizing that there **is no wind** blowing. The sound was a **supernatural** sound, and what happened **next** was maybe even **more** amazing. As the disciples looked around, they **saw** what seemed to be little tongues of **fire**, which **separated** and came to rest on **each one** of them. **Both** of these miraculous events let the disciples know that their **wait** was **over**. But God wasn't **finished** yet. Just as Jesus had promised, the **Holy Spirit** came upon those disciples in yet **another** very special way. They were able to speak **fluently** in languages they hadn't spoken **before**. If you have ever spent time studying a foreign **language** - especially one that is completely **different** from your own - then you **know** just how difficult and time-consuming it can be just to learn how to **read** it, and possibly to speak a few short **phrases**. But these disciples were able to speak these foreign languages so **fluently** that the **native** speakers of those languages easily **understood** them. They themselves commented, "*Each of us hears them speaking in his own native language.*" These were miracles which only **God** could accomplish, and that's exactly what the disciples were **telling** everyone around them. God has accomplished **amazing** and **wonderful** things.

But as always, not everyone wanted to **hear** that message. Some **scoffed** at the disciples and made **fun** of them. They said they were just babbling on because they were **drunk**. What a **ridiculous** charge. Really? - babbling on in multiple languages which they hadn't studied before, in completely understandable sentences because they were **drunk**? Obviously, **not**, and yet, their accusation really isn't too **surprising**. Those who are **enemies** of God's Word will **always** grasp at any straw they can, in order to try and **discredit** God's messengers.

But, leave it to the Apostle **Peter** to step forward and **defend** the disciples, and to **explain** to everyone **exactly** what was happening. These men were **not** drunk, but rather, this was **evidence** that God was fulfilling His **promise** to them. Peter quoted the words of the prophet **Joel**, which we heard in today's **first** lesson, "*This is what God says will happen in the last days: I will pour out my **Spirit** on all*

*flesh. Your sons and your 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**. I will show **wonders** in the sky above, and **signs** on the earth below, blood and fire and a rising cloud of smoke. The sun will be turned to **darkness** and the moon to **blood** before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And **this** will happen: Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be **saved**.”*

Peter used these words as the beginning of his sermon on Pentecost - a sermon which was all about **Jesus**. The people needed to know that **Jesus** - the person whom they had **crucified** just fifty days earlier - was actually the **Messiah** for whom they had been **waiting** for centuries. It was a message that **cut** the people **deeply**. But, it was **also** a message that brought the people **hope**. Peter told them that Jesus' death **covered** their guilt and sins - even their sin of unjustly **crucifying** Him. On that day, as all the disciples shared the message of salvation through Jesus, many people began to **realize** the great **love** which their Savior had for them, and as a result, we're told that about 3,000 souls were added to the number of Jesus' **followers**.

The Day of **Pentecost** was certainly a **great** day in the history of God's Church - in fact, we use it to mark the **birthday** of the New Testament Church. But that was **then**, and this is **now**. What does **that** day - a day which took place some 2,000 years ago - have to do with May 31, 2020? We can listen as intently as we want, but I don't think we're going to **hear** the sound of violent **wind** today (especially if the wind isn't actually **blowing**). And I'm **sure** we aren't going to **see** any tongues of flame dancing above the heads of everyone around us. And I would be **extremely** surprised if anyone around me spontaneously started **speaking** in a language they had never spoken before. That's because **those** parts of that special Day of Pentecost in our **text** are a part of **history**. But, let me tell you what is **not** a part of history. The LORD is still sending His **Holy Spirit** to His people, and **The Holy Spirit Still Speaks Today**.

How do we know that's **true**? We **know** it because it's what the LORD has **promised** in His Word. After Peter preached his sermon on Pentecost, he told the people, “**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” The LORD doesn't use **special sounds** and **miraculous sights** to accompany the gift of His Spirit today. Instead, He uses elements which are very **simple** - like the **water** of Baptism, and the **bread** and **wine** of the Lord's Supper. Through these

**sacraments**, God gives us His Holy Spirit. And we **also** receive the Holy Spirit whenever we **read** the Scriptures, or **hear** God's Word being proclaimed.

Have you ever taken time to think about what a tremendous **miracle** it is that God has placed His Spirit **inside** of us? It's **especially** wonderful because we know how much we **need** that Spirit. If God **hadn't** placed His Spirit in us, we would be walking **corpses** - completely **dead** in our trespasses and sins. But the Holy Spirit brings us **life**. He gives us the ability to **know** and to **trust** in Jesus as our **Savior** from sin. And the only way the LORD has promised to **give** us His Spirit is through the **Means of Grace** - God's **Word** and the **Sacraments**. If we **neglect** His Word - if we **stay away** from the sacrament - we're cutting ourselves **off** from the work of the Spirit, and we are **preventing** ourselves from receiving the **gifts** which Jesus has already **earned** for us, and which He desperately wants to **give** to us. But, when we are regularly making **use** of God's Word in our lives, and when we come to the Lord's Table **often**, we will be richly **blessed** with the Holy Spirit.

I'd like to go back to that **prophecy** from the Book of **Joel** for just a moment. The LORD said, "*I will pour out my **Spirit** on **all** people.*" That was a prophecy that was **fulfilled** on the Day of **Pentecost** some 2,000 years ago. But it is **also** a prophecy that is **still** being fulfilled **today**. Each one of **us** is a direct **fulfillment** of Joel's prophecy, as the LORD continues to pour out His **Holy Spirit** on us. But that's just the **first** part, because Joel's prophecy isn't just a prophecy about what the LORD does **for** us - it's **also** a prophecy about what the LORD does **through** us. God said, "*I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and **they will prophecy.***"

To **prophecy** means to **speak** God's Word - to **proclaim** the great things which our God has **done** for us. Whenever we **do** that - whenever we tell a **friend** or **family** member the Good News about the **Savior** - we are **fulfilling prophecy**. It's that Day of **Pentecost** recorded in our text all over again, as the Holy Spirit speaks **through** us. God has **promised** that **wherever** His Word is spoken, the **Holy Spirit** is at work.

In the Old Testament, the Festival of **Pentecost** was a time for the people to bring the **first fruits** of their **harvest** to the LORD. In the **New Testament** God used that festival to pour out His **Holy Spirit** on His disciples enabling them to bring to the LORD the **first fruits** of a great harvest of **souls**. In the days **following** our text, many **more** souls would be **added**, and it's work that still **continues** on **today** - in fact, it's work that will **never end**. By the grace of God, we get to **share** in that work. **The Holy Spirit Still Speaks Today**. May we continue to **listen** to

His voice, **share** the Savior with others, and bring **many souls** into God's kingdom through His Word and Sacrament, Amen.