

## Are You Pentecostal? Acts 2:1-21

Some years ago a seminary professor was serving as a guest lecturer at a seminary on the west coast. Just before the first lecture, one of the students stood up and said, "Before you speak, I need to know if you are Pentecostal." The room grew silent. The professor looked around for the Dean of the seminary! He was nowhere to be found. The student continued with his quiz right in front of everybody. The professor was taken aback, and so he said, "Do you mean do I belong to the Pentecostal Church?" He said, "No, I mean are you Pentecostal?" The professor said, "Are you asking me if I am charismatic?" The student said, "I am asking you if you are Pentecostal." The professor replied, "Do you want to know if I speak in tongues?" He said, "I want to know if you are Pentecostal." The professor said, "I don't know what your question is." The student said, "Obviously, you are not Pentecostal." And he left.

Today the church celebrates the Day of Pentecost. What does that mean for us today? Do we use the word "Pentecost" only as a noun or can it be used as an adjective? And so I ask you: Are you Pentecostal?

In spite of the fact that the church doesn't know what Pentecost means, the church insists that the word remain in our vocabulary as an adjective. The word can't simply be a noun – to represent a date, a place, an event in the history of the church. It has to be more than that, more than simply a memory, an item, something back there somewhere. The church insists that the word is adjective; it describes the church. It's what the church ought to be - "Pentecostal."

If the church is alive in the world today it is Pentecostal. And you thought we were Lutheran!

How do we keep this Spirit moving in and among us? How do we keep the fire burning? What must exist in us, around us, and through us, if we are to be Pentecostal? Simply these four things:

I. We are to be in one accord. When the day of Pentecost came, we learn, that the apostles were all together in one place. It was the day that Christ had promised. Beginning with Easter, the risen Christ had appeared at various times and places to the disciples. They knew beyond a

shadow of a doubt that he was the eternal living Lord, the Son of God who had come to bring forgiveness and new life. Now he had ascended to the Father and they waited in expectation, for the gift that Jesus had promised. They weren't really sure what the gift was. How could they possibly have known that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, was about to descend upon them? The result would be the beginning of the church. Pentecost is often considered the birthday of the Christian church. They received God's power to be bold and courageous witnesses for Christ.

This power comes on a day when they were in one accord, that's the King James Version. In other words, there was unity and agreement. There was a commonality among them. They shared all things in common; we learn later. It is important to note that it would not be that way forever. Later a major split would occur in the church over who should get in. The first Christians were all Jewish converts. Should Gentiles be allowed in the church? Paul became the apostle to the Gentiles and Peter worked primarily among the Jews. It has been said that Peter and Paul came out fighting and its been going on in the church ever since. But, in the early days, there was one accord. It was to that setting that the Holy Spirit came.

It probably wouldn't surprise you to learn that there are congregations in our district, congregations in our Synod, that have a reputation for constant in-fighting. You never know how these things get started, but they end up creating a poisonous atmosphere. Sometimes people love their ideas more than they love Jesus. Sometimes people love their traditions more than they love Jesus. When we forget the true mission of the church – to glorify God and to make Him known in the world and bring lost sinners into fellowship with God – we get nowhere. We need unity. We need community. If we expect great things to happen, then we must be of one accord.

II. Secondly, and for this one I have to dip back into chapter 1, verse 14, we are told: "They all joined together constantly in prayer." Do you know where the church is growing the fastest? Not in the United States, but Korea, Africa, and Latin America. For some years now there have been massive revivals taking place in these southern countries. One important mark of this revival is prayer.

While it is true that churches that are together, in one accord can accomplish much, no church

can be truly Pentecostal, full of the Holy Spirit, if it does not pray. And it seems to me that much of the church has lapsed into a weekly routine of Sunday morning sermons and Sunday school and Bible study. We have lost our desire to dedicate ourselves to prayer and Scripture daily expecting the Holy Spirit to move in our presence and change lives. A poem by an unknown author speaks of this:

I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day;  
I had so much to accomplish that I didn't take time to pray.  
Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier became each task.  
"Why doesn't God help me," I wondered. He answered: "You didn't ask."  
I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, gray and bleak,  
I wondered why God didn't show me, He said: "But you didn't seek."  
I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys at the lock,  
God gently and lovingly chided: "My child, you didn't knock."  
I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day.  
I had so much to accomplish, that I had to take time to pray.

Too many people are trying to go it alone. Too many churches are trying to go it alone. God invites us to pray – to turn our thoughts and hearts to Him. He wants us to give our concerns to Him and then believe and trust that He'll take care of them.

I want to read to you what the President said about our nation:

"We have been the recipients of the greatest blessings of heaven. We have been preserved in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand, which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. We should be moved then to humble ourselves before God, to confess our national sins, and to pray for

clemency and forgiveness."

The President said this on April 30, 1863! Abraham Lincoln said these words proclaiming a National Day of Fasting and Prayer. Our need for prayer has not changed. Nations as well as individual people stand in need of prayer. Prayer for guidance. Prayer for deliverance. Prayer to shape us into people of integrity. Prayer to God to forgive us of our sins and transform us into the people He desires us to be. Which brings us to our third point.

III. If we are to be a Pentecostal church and Pentecostal people, full of the Holy Spirit, we need to repent. To repent means to turn around; to turn away from sinful ways and sinful habits and turn to God and His will for us. And so we repent of our sins. We admit and confess them to God. And through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, we receive forgiveness for our sins. In God's eyes those sins are gone and forgotten.

In the very first sermon of the church, recorded in Acts 2, Peter says, "Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When he had finished giving his sermon, the people said to Peter: "What shall we do?" His response: Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Pentecost is all about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit works in us, comes to us, through Baptism and through the Word of God, to turn us around, to change our hearts. Only by the power of the Spirit can we confess our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Only by the working of the Spirit can we receive the gift of faith and experience God's love and forgiveness. Scripture speaks of the Christian's life being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Instead of being controlled by the sinful human nature, instead of living just to satisfy the desires of the flesh, we live to glorify God. We are Pentecostal, full of the Holy Spirit, when we live out those fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness instead of rage, anger, malice, greed, strife.

III. Finally, if we are to be a Pentecostal church and Pentecostal people, we must be missional. The Spirit was given for a reason, for a purpose. When the disciples received the Spirit at Pentecost, what did they do? They didn't go home. They didn't have a meeting to discuss what had happened. They didn't develop a 5 year plan of action. No, they went out and told people about the Savior who was crucified and then came to life again. They went out and proclaimed

in different languages that salvation had come in Jesus Christ. We are here to bring Jesus to people who don't know him. We are here to proclaim, to share, to tell. We are here to make a difference in people's lives, an eternal difference.

(Video)

That same spirit that was poured out on the disciples has been poured out on you in your Baptism. It is that same Spirit who works through the Word to strengthen your faith and empower you to live for Christ. That Spirit working in us and working in this church will bring us unity, will make us powerful in prayer, will move us to repent and turn our lives over to God, and will enable us to share our Savior with others. So, let me ask you again: Are you Pentecostal? Amen.