

The Festival of Pentecost (May 31, 2020)	1854
O. T. Lesson: Joel 2:28-29	Morning Praise: p. 45
Epistle: Acts 2:1-21	184
Gospel: John 16:5-11	Psalm 51b
Text: Acts 2:22-36	182
Theme: <u>The Holy Spirit Is At Work.</u>	186
I. Counseling with the word of truth.	183
II. Testifying about Jesus.	
III. Convicting the world of sin.	

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Acts 2:22-36 Peter preaches to the crowd on Pentecost:

[Peter said:] "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him:

"I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence."

"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

"The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Holy Spirit, come to us through God's word today and work the Pentecost miracle of faith in our hearts. Lead us to accept God's word as the absolute truth that it is, and through that word counsel us, setting our lives right with God and guiding us to serve God in all we do. Keep us mindful of the fact that we are sinners who need a Savior, and set before our eyes Jesus, the one crucified for our sins, whom God has made both Lord and Christ.

Dear friends to whom the Holy Spirit has come,

Today is the day of Pentecost, when we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who has graciously come to us and worked faith in our hearts through the word of God. Who is the Holy Spirit? We hear about him often in the Bible. But who is he? He is one of the three persons of the trinity, true God with the Father and the Son.

We know God the Father as the creator of heaven and earth, and the one who takes care of his creation and provides for us. We know God the Son, Jesus Christ, who came to this earth and died on the cross for our sins. But who is the Holy Spirit? He is perhaps a bit more difficult to get a handle on, yet he is the one who has the closest relationship with us. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit lives and works in our hearts through God's word. We could not believe in God by ourselves, but the Holy Spirit works that miracle of faith in us, and strengthens and keeps us in the one true faith. So the Holy Spirit is not some nebulous, obscure being. He is a distinct person, true God, who has an intimate relationship with us. He is our contact with God. Some of you might be wondering what is the difference between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost. There is no difference. Both terms describe and refer to that same person.

Before Jesus died on the cross, he explained to his disciples that he would not be with them physically for very much longer. But he promised them: "I will not leave you as orphans." [Jn. 14:18] "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth." [Jn. 14:16-17] "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." [Jn. 14:26] "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me." [Jn. 15:26] "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." [Jn. 16:13] Jesus also told his disciples that the Holy Spirit "will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin." [John 16:8] In Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, we see the Holy Spirit at work. The Holy Spirit Is At Work! Counseling with the word of truth. Testifying about Jesus. And, Convicting the world of sin.

Pentecost was a harvest festival that the Jews celebrated every year. The city of Jerusalem was packed with people from many nations as they came to present the first-fruits of their crops as thank-offerings to the Lord. It is no accident that the Lord chose this day when three continents were represented in Jerusalem, to pour out the Holy Spirit. That day of Pentecost was fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead, ten days after he ascended into heaven. On that day, Jesus' promise to his disciples came true--the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. The believers "were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." [Acts 2:1-4] Many people from Jerusalem and the visitors from other countries came to see what was going on. And then Peter preached his Pentecost sermon to that great crowd, and 3000 people repented and were baptized.

The tongues of fire, the sound of the violent wind, and the speaking in tongues were special signs that demonstrated that initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Those special signs were important on that special day. But sometimes people become so taken up with those signs that they miss the whole point and misunderstand the work of the Holy Spirit. Even on that day of Pentecost, the all-important thing was the word of God, Peter's sermon. That's where we see the Holy Spirit in action, working a bold testimony in Peter, and working the miracle of faith in the hearts of his hearers. It was not the tongues of fire, nor the sound of a violent wind, nor speaking in tongues, but Peter's sermon that caused 3000 people to repent and be baptized on that day.

Could this be the same Peter, the same Peter who on the night before Jesus was

crucified cowardly denied him three times? Could this be the same Peter who after Jesus' death hid with the other disciples behind locked doors for fear of the Jews? And now, not only does he face the crowd and speak, but he looks them in the eye and boldly proclaims: "God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." The Holy Spirit produced that bold testimony in Peter.

The Holy Spirit was at work, counseling with the word of truth. Several times in his sermon, Peter quoted from the Old Testament, always assuming, "These words are God's truth." Jesus himself had often quoted the Old Testament as God's truth and stated, "The scripture cannot be broken." The Bible is God's truth, absolute truth. Its author is the Holy Spirit. It clearly says, "Holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

The Holy Spirit uses that word of truth to counsel people. Peter's audience was clearly on the wrong track in life. They had killed Jesus and were continuing on in their rejection against him. But through the word of truth, the Holy Spirit was counseling them to see and understand the truth and get them on the right track through the Savior.

At times we could use some counseling. Sometimes our lives turn into a tangled up mess, one problem after another. Where do we turn for answers? Wouldn't it be best to turn to the truth, the truth of God's word and let the Holy Spirit counsel us and guide our lives? How important it is that we keep God's word ever before us, so that we stay on the right track through life, so that we trust in Jesus for forgiveness and turn from those ways that lead to destruction.

There is only one right track in life, and that is the one Jesus has walked for us. The Holy Spirit has one message for us--Jesus Christ, the crucified, is our Savior. In Peter's sermon we see the Holy Spirit at work, testifying about Jesus.

"Men of Israel," Peter said, "listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know." Many in that crowd had witnessed Jesus' miracles, which proved him to be the very Son of God, the long promised Messiah.

They had crucified Jesus, but by doing so, they were only carrying out God's plan. They could not so easily get rid of Jesus, as Peter explained: "God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him [in Psalm 16]: 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'" Peter explains that David was not speaking about himself, but rather, "seeing what was ahead, spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay." The Bible clearly proclaimed that the Savior would die and rise from the dead.

And now where is this Jesus? Peter says he is "exalted to the right hand of God," the position of power and glory, ruling over all things in heaven and on earth, as Scripture also had proclaimed in Psalm 110: "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Peter explains that obviously, David did not ascend to heaven; rather, in the Psalm he spoke those words about his Lord.

And Peter adds the final touch, that now on Pentecost, this risen and ascended Lord Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit as he had promised he would. "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and

Christ." Jesus is the Savior God had promised in the Old Testament, and he has completely carried out God's plan of salvation for mankind.

The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. That is what his work is all about. That is what the entire Bible is all about -- Jesus the Savior of mankind. When doubts creep into our minds concerning Jesus and the total forgiveness and salvation he has won for us, then we need to turn to the Scriptures and let the Holy Spirit testify about Jesus to us, and show us the truth, that God made this Jesus the crucified, both Lord and Christ.

The truth is: Jesus is the only Savior, the only way to salvation. The Bible says, "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus is our only way of salvation because we're sinners, and he is the only one who has paid for our sins and taken them away -- on that cross. It is the Holy Spirit's work to convict the world of sin, and we see him doing just that in Peter's sermon.

Peter didn't mince any words with that crowd. He told it just as it was: "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross." That crowd was guilty of the greatest sin of all -- killing the very Son of God. And now God had raised Jesus from the dead and glorified him as the ruler of heaven and earth. When those people would die and stand before God, they would be judged by Jesus whom they crucified. They were in deep trouble!

Peter's sermon cut them to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter's reply was simple and gracious: "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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Dear friends, we were not a part of that Good Friday crowd that shouted, "Crucify him!" Still it is the Holy Spirit's job to convict us of sin as well. We did cause Jesus to be crucified by every sin we've ever committed. Every wrong we've ever done caused Jesus to go to that cross and, like the nails, our every sin held him there. When we one day die and face God for all eternity, it is Jesus who will serve as our judge. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin so that we repent and trust in the only Savior for forgiveness. Then we need not be afraid of Jesus the Lord of all because he welcomes those who repent.

Today might not be as exciting as the day of Pentecost described in Acts 2, but the Holy Spirit is at work today just the same. It is he who still causes people to boldly proclaim God's word of truth today, and graciously works faith in the hearts of those who hear, counseling them and setting their lives right with God. The Holy Spirit continues to testify about Jesus, and will keep on testifying about him until the last day when Jesus returns visibly as judge of all. It is the Holy Spirit who miraculously works faith and forgiveness through the word and sacraments in our hearts. It is he who continues to convict us of sin and point us to our Savior.

Amen.

May he who began a good work in you carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. Amen.