

“We, Pentecost People.” Acts 2:1-21

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.” But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The Day of Pentecost. The giving of the Holy Spirit. It has raised a lot of questions. Such as - where was the Spirit in the Old Testament time? How were people saved back then? Was the conversion of 3000 just out of blue? And then all the confusion with those tongues, etc.

Lots of questions, indeed. We won't be able to address and answer all of them at once. Today I invite you to meditate upon the following. **What is the way of the Spirit? How does God work? And what are the effects of the Spirit? The way, the work and the effects.** And may the same Spirit who descended on the Church on that first Pentecost guide us as well.

First, what is the way of the Spirit? Was that Pentecost the first time the Holy Spirit was given? What about the true believers in the OT time, was then God engaging with them in some other way? No and no! That wasn't the first time, and God wasn't engaging with the believers who lived before Christ differently. We can read that since the very beginning God's Word and God's Spirit were together, as He was hovering above the waters when God spoke and ordered His creation. Since times immemorial God has spoken to His people. And

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whenever He spoke to them directly, or whenever He spoke to them through His servants, prophets, the Word of God was accompanied by His Holy Spirit. [Acts 7:51-52] That is how the Triune God engages with us. Always has and always will. He speaks and as He speaks He sends us His Spirit. The same was true with every believer in the OT time, the same was true for all the disciples of Jesus. God spoke and His Spirit went forth.

After His resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciples, spoke to them and gave them... the Holy Spirit. Both on the last night and before His ascension Jesus promised that He will send His Church... the Helper, the Holy Spirit of God. As John the apostle has recorded it: "**For [God] gives the Spirit without measure.**" [John 3:34] Yes, He does!

Then came the Day of Pentecost. The giving of the Holy Spirit wasn't anything new. But there certainly were new elements in what the Triune God did on that Day. There is only one true God, the Triune God, and the way He engages with us hasn't changed. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, from the very beginning till the end.

However, through the incarnation and ministry of Jesus the Triune God provided the fullest revelation of who He is. One God and three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, living in eternal loving relationships. God's revelation through Jesus was the fulfillment and helped to make sense of so many OT prophecies.

But similarly, the Triune God had announced centuries before the Day of Pentecost that He will pour His Spirit on all His people. Now, this is significant: whenever we have a record of God appearing to His people in the OT time, revealing a glimpse of His divine glory, almost always there is an imagery of fire involved.

Flaming torch for Abraham. Burning bush for Moses. Pillar of smoke and fire for Israelites. Great clouds with fire flashing forth for Ezekiel, etc. As God Himself declared through Moses: "**For the Lord your God is a consuming fire.**" [Deut. 4:24]

Came the Day of Pentecost. "**And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.**"

The Triune God did it for all the world to know and for you to be assured that He Himself now dwells in His people, that Jesus has sent the promise of His Father upon you, that you have been clothed with power from on high. [Luke 24:49] As Paul the apostle put it: "**Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?**" [1 Cor 3:16] This is the way of the Spirit. He dwells in you and empowers you. This is most certainly true for every Christian. This is true for you. Today and every day.

Now, our second question, how does God work? How much does He want everyone to come to the knowledge of truth and be saved? How hard does He work to make it happen? We may look at the events of the Day of Pentecost and wonder: "Wow! The Spirit just came down and suddenly... effortlessly... 3000 people received God's message, got baptized, and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Easy, what a miracle!"

Sure, every time when someone is joined to the body of Christ, it is a miracle. A miracle of God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. However, it is important for us to recognize that the events of the Day of Pentecost and the far-reaching effects of those events didn't happen

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in a vacuum. Not at all. God had been at work for a long time before that Day came. What do we know? What work had He done preparing for the Day of Pentecost? We can begin with listing how God had used the ancient empires to advance His purposes. God used Assyrian Empire to scatter the Northern Kingdom of Israel among the nations under their rule. He used Babylonian Empire to bring the best from the Southern Kingdom to Babylon.

He used the Persian Empire to settle His chosen people everywhere from India to Ethiopia. [Esther 9:30, 1:1] As a result from ancient generations the message from the Triune God had been proclaimed in every city in the ancient world. [Acts 15:21]

Then the Roman Empire brought lasting peace and built a network of roads that enabled easy and safe traveling through the Empire. That is how all those visitors from all those many nations had made it to Jerusalem. God's people responding to God's call, traveling from all the corners of the world, gathering in His Holy City, longing for God's salvation. Open to listen.

But then, Jesus had been busy as well. He had handpicked 12 apostles as His closest disciples and eyewitnesses of everything that He did and taught. But then He had also trained a wider circle, the 72 whom He had sent to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is nearby [Luke 10].

And then before His ascension back to the Father, He had appeared to more than 500 brothers at once to make them eyewitnesses that He indeed has risen from the dead to live and to reign forever [1 Cor 15:6]. And we know that leading up to the Day of Pentecost there were around 120 disciples gathering in Jerusalem and it is understood that it was those 120 who were together when the Holy Spirit came upon them as a mighty and violent wind. They all began to speak of the mighty acts of God addressing those who had gathered that day in Jerusalem.

Those who heard the message, those who were baptized and received forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit returned to their homelands in all the corners of Roman Empire overjoyed, bringing with them the Good News of Jesus Christ, evangelizing and allowing God to bring together new communities of His chosen people, Christians. [That's how, for example, first Christian communities were formed in Rome.]

The Triune God is a hardworking God. He invests Himself fully using every turn and twist of history to prepare the harvest so that in a due season it may be reaped. It is an important and very practical insight for us as well. We are the Temple of God here in Oshawa, in Durham, we are sent with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

And we need to recognize that our Triune God has been at work already for long time preparing opportunities for us to reap the harvest. We just need to pray that the Holy Spirit enlightens our eyes and ears to notice them.

It may be your family members, neighbors or friends, someone in your workplace or hobby circle, it may be people sent to Canada from other countries where they couldn't hear the Good News of Jesus, it may be young students, gathered in Oshawa by thousands, keen to learn and discover, and so on. One we can be certain of; the Lord has been and is daily at work so that everyone can come to the knowledge of truth and be saved. [1 Tim 2:4] That is how He works.

Finally, let's talk about the effects of the Holy Spirit. He empowers us and sends us to carry on the Great Commission, proclaiming the Gospel, making the disciples. We can rejoice in how

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the Triune God keeps His promises, how He has sent us the power from above, how He Himself gets everyone of His disciples involved.

It is Peter the apostle whose address we have recorded in the book of Acts. Not by accident. He is the one who speaks publicly and with God's authority, foreshadowing the Office of the Public Ministry, that is, pastors. But at the same time, it is all 120 from among Jesus' disciples, and all 3000 who were baptized, who became sons of daughters of God and who prophesied - just as God had foretold through prophet Joel - to bring the Good News to all nations.

The Spirit Himself helped to deliver the Good News to everyone in their own mother tongue, thus sending us a clear message that He means business when He sends His Church to all nations. He desires it and He graciously enables our participation.

But then there is a very peculiar effect of the Holy Spirit, we see it in the reaction of those who heard the disciples speaking. Did you notice it? As they heard the disciples telling **"in their own tongues the mighty works of God, they were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"**

But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." This is it! **"They are filled with new wine."** Meaning, drunk! Why would they say that? How do people behave when they have had their sip of wine, or something similar?

Alcohol narrows down our perception of reality. As a result, we may feel overjoyed, speaking freely and without hesitation, daring, outgoing, full of energy. That is how disciples behaved on that day. Overjoyed, speaking boldly about the mighty works of God, being so confident that others conclude that something must be off.

Except they were not drunk, and their perception of reality wasn't narrowed. On the contrary, it was expanded as never before. They experienced the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy. They experienced the fulfillment of God's promise to dwell in them.

They were given to experience how it is when the Triune God comes down to us and embraces us with His fiery power and His passionate Fatherly love. Their perception of God's reality and presence was enhanced as never before. And so, they couldn't do anything else but joyfully declare the mighty works that God had done in Jesus.

That was the effect of the Holy Spirit. That is the effect of the Holy Spirit. And you are in the same company. You have received the Holy Spirit as much as they have. God dwells with you as much as He did with them. He gives your power for the Great Commission as much as He gave to them. And you are as loved and cherished by your Father in Heaven as any of them was. These are the last days. You are sons and daughters of God entrusted with His Good News. You are called, prepared and sent to participate in God's mighty work of salvation.

May God the Father keeps pouring His Spirit upon you, with violent wind or without, with tongues of fire or without! May He help you to experience that you are so loved and valued by Him and so privileged to partake in His mission, that those who meet you and hear you speaking the Good News may wonder: "Are they filled with new wine?"

And may our joyful message follow the pattern of Pentecost, bringing many and many into God's family and expanding His Kingdom to the end of the earth. For we are Pentecost People, yes! We all are. Amen.