

Introduction

Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Crossing all boundaries that would separate us, the Spirit brings the wideness of God's mercy to places we least expect it—to a crowd of strangers of different lands and tongues, to dry bones, to our weak hearts. Jesus promises his disciples that they will be accompanied by the Holy Spirit, and that this Spirit reveals the truth. We celebrate that we too have been visited with this same Spirit. Guided by the truth, we join together in worship, and then disperse to share the fullness of Christ's love with the world.

Prayer of the Day

Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

Originally Pentecost was a Jewish thanksgiving-type festival celebrated seven weeks after Passover. On this particular Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the entire community of believers just as Jesus had promised and the scriptures had prophesied. Empowered by the Spirit, the entire community bears witness to God's activity in multiple languages.

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is

what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' "

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

²⁴How manifold are your | works, O LORD!

In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full | of your creatures.

²⁵**Yonder is the sea, great and wide, with its swarms too man- | y to number,
living things both | small and great.**

²⁶There go the ships | to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you made for the | sport of it.

²⁷**All of them | look to you
to give them their food | in due season.**

²⁸You give it to them; they | gather it;
you open your hand, and they are filled | with good things.

²⁹**When you hide your face, | they are terrified;
when you take away their breath, they die and return | to their dust.**

³⁰You send forth your Spirit, and they | are created;
and so you renew the face | of the earth.

³¹**May the glory of the LORD en- | dure forever;
O LORD, rejoice in | all your works.**

³²You look at the earth | and it trembles;
you touch the mountains | and they smoke.

³³**I will sing to the LORD as long | as I live;
I will praise my God while I | have my being.**

³⁴May these words of | mine please God.
I will rejoice | in the LORD.

^{35b}**Bless the LORD, | O my soul.
Hal- | lelujah!**

Second Reading: Romans 8:22-27

By pouring the Holy Spirit into our hearts, God gives us the promised first fruit of eternal life so that we await God's future in hope. In the meantime, the Spirit also intercedes for us by carrying the prayers of our weak human hearts to God.

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Gospel Reading: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

While speaking to his disciples before his death, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Helper" and describes the difference the Spirit will make in their lives and in the world.

[Jesus said,] ²⁶"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{16:4b}"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹²"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

Prayers of Intercession

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love. saying “hear us, O God,” and responding, “your mercy is great.”

A brief silence.

Gracious God, you give the Holy Spirit to your church, filling it with many and varied gifts. In the church throughout the world, strengthen us in our visioning and dreaming, that it may discover anew the Spirit’s creative work. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of life, your mighty works are too numerous to count. The earth is full of your creatures, living things both great and small. Open your hand and give them the necessities of this life. Send your fresh Spirit over the face of the earth. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of the nations, at the sound of the rushing wind, people speaking different languages proclaimed and heard together your deeds of power. Fill the leaders of nations with your Holy Spirit, so that they exercise your gracious will in the lives of people. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of faithfulness, you tend to the needs of your people, even the sighs of our hearts. Hear those who cry out to you in distress. Restore to wholeness all who are in any need this day (*especially*). Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of love, fill this congregation (*name*) with gratitude for the gifts we have received from you. Renew our ministries, heal our divisions, and open us to the needs of our neighbors. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of hope, those who have died in you raise their eternal song of praise. We give you thanks for the many gifts of your people and rejoice in the witness of your saints (*especially*). Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A reflection for the Day of Pentecost...

The Holy Spirit's Groaning

Few sounds capture a groan like birth pangs. It is the raw sound of life and birth as well as of pain. It is the guttural desire for the end of the waiting for what has been anticipated and desired. For any who have been present through such an event, it is difficult to ever forget. It is in equal parts beautiful, stunning, and holy, as well as raw, painful, and horrific.

"Creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves . . . groan inwardly while we wait for adoption," writes Paul to the church in Rome. He describes aptly that painful wail of our souls for the redemption we know so well, the restoration of all things promised in Christ. As Lutherans we know this all too well as the "now but not yet" proposition of our faith. We have been told of the return of the Messiah. We prepare for this coming and see how the whole of creation groans for her own restoration. We join this creation waiting for our own hearts, souls, and bodies to be restored. We know this is coming and as in pains of labor groan for this reality. While we wait, we are given a midwife, a Spirit of God to join us in our waiting for the birth of a new world and a new reality. This gift is given this day, the day of Pentecost. May the Spirit join us in our cry to God, eagerly awaiting the begotten, the Son of God, Jesus.

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