

Sunday, May 28, 2023 – Day of Pentecost

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Introduction

Pentecost derives its name from the Jewish festival celebrating the harvest and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai fifty days after Passover. Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the Holy Spirit as God's presence within and among us. In Acts the Spirit arrives in rushing wind and flame, bringing God's presence to all people. Paul reminds us that though we each have different capacities, we are unified in the Spirit that equips us with these gifts. Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples, empowering them to forgive sin. We celebrate that we too are given the breath of the Holy Spirit and sent out to proclaim God's redeeming love to all the world.

Prayer of the Day

O God, on this day you open the hearts of your faithful people by sending into us your Holy Spirit. Direct us by the light of that Spirit, that we may have a right judgment in all things and rejoice at all times in your peace, through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival that marked the fiftieth day after Passover. Luke portrays the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the disciples before the gathered and astonished people assembled in Jerusalem for the festival. Filled with the Spirit, the disciples were able to witness to the power of Christ's resurrection.

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: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

Paul is helping the Corinthians understand the relationship between our God-given unity and Spirit-created diversity. The Spirit creates the unity of faith and gives all Christians diverse gifts for the common benefit of all. We need one another's diverse spiritual gifts because the same Spirit has given them to each person for the common good.

^{3b}No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Gospel: John 20:19-23

The risen Jesus appears to his disciples, offering them a benediction, a commission, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Prayers of Intercession

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need, saying “hear us, O God,” and responding, “your mercy is great.”

A brief silence.

Passionate God, you sent your Spirit through the gifts of fire, wind, and word. As you equipped the disciples for their work, equip us to bring the good news to all those who long for you. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Restoring God, wind and flame bring life and destruction throughout the world. We pray for those who work with wind energy, for migratory birds, for protection for lands facing destructive fire, for forestry managers and firefighters. Renew the face of the earth. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Ever-present God, your spirit embraces all. Send your spirit of understanding to immigrants, refugees, and any experiencing language barriers. Bless the work of translators, ESL teachers, ambassadors, and international peace organizations. Safely guide those fleeing war and danger. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Merciful God, you anoint us with your spirit. Bless nurses, doctors, midwives, chaplains, counselors, and hospice workers as they care for those in need. We pray for all who seek your comfort (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Generous God, you impart a variety of gifts. Set aflame the desire to learn from one another, especially those who differ from us. Make your presence known through missionaries, peace workers, and through the outreach ministries of our synod and community (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Life-giving God, we give thanks for those who have died to new life in you (*especially*). As we observe Memorial Day, we remember those who died in military service. Comfort all who mourn, and usher in a world where war is no more. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ’s resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

Amen.

A reflection for this Day of Pentecost...

God Gives More than Enough

It is the “first day of the week” (John 20:19), the day of the new creation, but to those locked away in the upper room in fear, the world is as it always has been. So entrenched are they in the ways of grief and guilt that the Risen One in their midst needs to offer his life-giving invitation twice: “Peace be with you.” The logic of the new age is peace, not retribution; forgiveness, not vengeance. With the invitation to new life comes also the means: the gift of the Holy Spirit, breathed upon them and within them. Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, so now are these disciples sent as witnesses to God’s saving work.

Pentecost is therefore the crowning achievement of the Jesus story. Now, more than ever, these huddled disciples would have just cause to sing the “Dayenu” (“It would have been enough”) verses from the Passover seder meal, but revised: It would have been enough for the Word and wisdom of God to have been born in the flesh . . . Dayenu! It would have been enough for the Word to grow to adulthood and share his stunning parables about God’s gracious activity in the world . . . Dayenu! It would have been enough for this Word to say to his enemies, “Father, forgive them” . . . Dayenu! It would have been enough for this Word to have died on a cross for us . . . Dayenu! It would have been enough that he rose again in blessing, not vengeance . . . Dayenu! But now, beyond what we would even expect—the Word becomes our word and it is written on our hearts at Pentecost . . . Dayenu! It is enough, and more than enough to enflame our ministry of reconciliation in a world in need of a healing word.

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