

“MOTHERHOOD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

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May 13, 2018, 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: Acts 2:1-13

Introduction.

In chapter two of Acts the Holy Spirit gives us the revelation of God concerning what happened on Pentecost Day after Jesus ascended back into heaven. The chapter is too long to deal with in one sermon so I decided to get a running start at it the week before Pentecost Sunday.

Jesus told His disciples not to leave Jerusalem without the Holy Spirit. Don't do anything without the power of God and the wisdom of God in us by the fulness of His Holy Spirit.

God once again made good on a promise, fulfilling His promise to send the Holy Spirit.

What actually happened at 9 am on Pentecost morning?

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival that took place 50 days after Passover, at the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest.

It is one of three pilgrimage festivals when Jews were expected to come to the temple in Jerusalem to offer gifts and offerings. This is why Jews from the ends of the earth were all gathered in Jerusalem. It was a most strategic time for God to pour out His Spirit.

The apostles and followers of Jesus, presumably the 120 gathered in the Upper Room, were all together and they all received the same Spirit. The Spirit became more personal and intimate, making His dwelling place in the hearts of men.

Most people focus on the tongues, but Pentecost was accompanied by much more than that.

There was a sound, that sounded like a mighty rushing wind (different from earthly wind).

There was a sight, that look like divided tongues of fire resting on each of them.

There was spoken utterances in at least 15 different languages.

There was anointed preaching by a formerly uneducated Galilean fisherman.

It resulted in much praise and worship and the conversion of 3,000 souls in one day.

Wind and fire are common Biblical symbols of the activity of the Holy Spirit. Spirit, wind and breath are all the same word in Hebrew and Greek. The dry bones of Ezekiel received wind and breath. Jesus spoke of the wind of the Spirit blowing wherever it will.

John 3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Fire has often been a symbol of the presence of God (pillar of fire, burning bush, holy mountain).

John predicted this when he said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

After the wind and fire, they started speaking in tongues. The tongues described here are different than what is described in I Corinthians where Paul talks about the gift of tongues. In I Corinthians it is an unknown language used for praising God.

At Pentecost what they spoke languages understood by the all the people from fifteen different nations of the Graeco-Roman world scattered around the Mediterranean, every nation where there were Jews.

Besides being amazed at hearing their own languages spoken, they were amazed they were being spoken by Galileans, people known to be uneducated, backwards, hicks who said things like ain't and I reckon and you all. They were missing teeth and had names like Bubba.

Remember at the incarnation God revealed it and gave the message to the shepherds. He does it again at the coming of the Spirit, choosing people not highly esteemed. Every chance He gets:

I Corinthians 1:27-29 God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

There were two reactions to what happened.

Some were amazed and curious and wanted to know more. Others rejected it and ridiculed it, mocking them, making allegations that they were drunk.

God used this false accusation as the occasion that prompted the first great Spirit-anointed sermon by Peter, the quintessential, stereotypical Galilean if there ever was one.

I am not going to dwell on it but we must be reminded that even in the face of such a clear demonstration of the power of God, there will always be those who reject it. If no one rejects our message, it may be evidence we are not being faithful to the message.

Beware when all men speak well of you.

Was that the first time the Holy Spirit came to people?

In the OT the Holy Spirit was very much present and active from the beginning of creation on. He anointed the ministry and work of prophets, priests and kings. He filled and anointed King Saul for a while and then was taken away and came on David.

Early in the NT we see the Spirit filled Zechariah, Elizabeth and John the Baptist, and of course Mary.

John 20:22-23 And when [Jesus] had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

In other words, this was not the first time the disciples received the Holy Spirit. The reason I make this point is to say that I don't believe Pentecost was when the disciples were converted and received the Spirit for the first time.

Can what happened at Pentecost happen again?

Pentecost was not a one-time event in Acts.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

I want to suggest to you that what happened on Pentecost was not the conversion of the disciples, of them being born again and receiving the Holy Spirit for the first time.

The sending of the Spirit was the sending of new power for ministry and witness, new boldness for proclaiming the mighty works of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want to suggest that what happened at Pentecost is something to be desired and sought by all Christians, but the experience to be sought is not fire or wind or speaking Swahili or some heavenly praise language.

The experience to be sought is a growing and increasing level of intimacy with God, joy in worship, victory over sin, power for holy living, and courage in witness.

Let me explain it with an illustration from the great British preacher D.M. Lloyd-Jones:

A man and his little child [are] walking down the road and they are walking hand in hand, and the child knows that he is the child of his father, and he knows that his

father loves him, and he rejoices in that, and he is happy in it. There is no uncertainty about it all, but suddenly the father, moved by some impulse, takes hold of the child and picks him up, fondles him in his arms, kisses him, embraces him, showers his love upon him, and then he puts him down again and they go on walking together.

That is it! The child knew before that his father loved him, and he knew that he was his child. But oh! the loving embrace, this extra outpouring of love, this unusual manifestation of it — that is the kind of thing. The Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”

When Jesus baptizes a person with the Holy Spirit, Lloyd-Jones says, the person is “carried not only from doubt to belief but to certainty, to awareness of the presence and the glory of God.”

There is filled and then there is filled. There is filled and they there is drenched, overwhelmed.

We Reformed Christians are great at our rational understanding of the Gospel and how we ought to live according to the truth of the Bible. We are really good at talking about the great glory of God and His sovereignty and providence.

It's like we have good wood, but no fire. The Pentecostals, they have the fire but sometimes lack good wood. We need to get the two together.

Pentecost and Acts tells us there is something more, something more than we ask or imagine. We have become lukewarm and we have become comfortable with being lukewarm.

And do you know why we are lukewarm? We all know the verse about being lukewarm, but do we know the cause of the lukewarmness? Jesus gives it right after that verse we all know in Revelation 3:16 when He is confronting the church at Laodicea.

You are rich, you have prospered, you have everything you need. You are good. You are content, meaning complacent. You don't think you need much more. I need nothing.

Revelation 3:17-20 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and *I need nothing*, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

“I need nothing.” Those may be the scariest words in the Bible, certainly some of the saddest. That is the soul lost in complacency, that doesn’t care, that is satisfied with a pound of God and ten pounds of the good life. This is the soul of the church in American.

No, I won’t leave it like that, that’s a safe way to say it, that keeps it out there, you know like the churches in Scranton, PA. That’s a nice safe distance. No, this is my soul and yours.

My problem is not that I ask too much of God, but that I ask too little. Acts is about raising expectations and desires. About expecting much from God, attempting much for God.

We don’t know how spiritually poor and bankrupt we are, we don’t realize how much more God has for us. We are missing out on something God wants all of us to have.

Romans 5:5 God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Do we know this love poured out in our hearts? Will we wrestle like Jacob with the angel until God gives us this blessing?

Can we at least rise to the level of those Jews who were amazed and perplexed and asked, “What does this mean?” Can we at least ask, “God, is there more that you have for me?” More power, more purity. Maybe not heard in wind and seen in fire, but felt in our hearts.

Pentecost says we can have a more intimate and personal experience of the living God in our lives and experience new boldness and courage to live for Him and witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We should pray that something happens in our lives and in our fellowship that arrests the attention of those around us, that makes them stop and ask questions, that shakes us all out of our complacency.

Implications and application.

Being a mom is one of the hardest jobs in the world. It is physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritual exhausting and draining. But did you know you can be completely drained and Spirit-filled. In fact, it may be the best way to be Spirit-filled, when we are empty of ourselves and our resources. Being a Christian mother is impossible without dependence and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

The goal of mothering is to pass on to our kids a God-centered, Jesus-loving, Bible-honoring vision for life. Give your kids a front row seat to how God works in our hearts and lives, how He gives us patience, how He exposes our sins and enables us to humbly confess them

and seek His transforming grace, how we don't know everything and what to do and how we pray and ask our Father for wisdom.

In order for our children to know God's love we need to know God's love. When you know how deeply loved by God you are, it will spill over into your kids.

I know being a mom is a 24/7 job and time for your soul is hard to find. If you have time for Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Shutterfly, then you can make time for God in Scripture and prayer. I don't say that to make you feel guilty, I say it to give you hope that you can find a few moments here and there. The Bible is better than Google.

We all need the wisdom of God. Are we not all Galileans, foolish, ignorant, dependent?
We all need the power of God. Are we not all weak, inadequate?
We all need the wind/power and fire/purity and enabling grace of God in our lives.

Luke 11:9-13 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 11 What fathers among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*"

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Prayer:

Father, we know we are always in danger of lukewarmness, we are tempted to coast along, to be complacent. Show us the true condition of our souls and give us a sense of urgency to turn back to a total dependence on you, to seek you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Make us dissatisfied with just going along to get along, with the average comfortable middle class American life. Stir us up to a passion for you, for the Gospel, for a complete commitment to you. Awaken the sleeping churches of our community and nation. Wake us up to eternal things, things that matter, things that count.

Come Holy Spirit, open our blind eyes, revives us again with a spirit of genuine repentance and sincere faith, for the sake of the glory of God and the glory of Christ's church. Give us the fullness of your Spirit, for your glory, for your namesake, that we might know you and love you and obey you and be your bold witnesses and turn the world upside down for your sake.