

“PENTECOST EXPLAINED: THIS IS THAT.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Acts 2:14-21

Prayer: Holy Father, through your Word and sacrament, fall afresh upon us and help us for the sake of your glory and your gospel. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Introduction.

You know how we tend to remember painful or traumatic or embarrassing experiences in life. Experts say the reason for this is because adrenalin fixes those experiences in our brains.

I remember my first sermon. November 11, 1981, preaching class at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. It was painful, traumatic and embarrassing all at the same time. I was nervous, I felt completely foolish and inadequate. It was one of my worst ever.

So there were really two miracles on Pentecost, the filling of the Holy Spirit enabling them to speak in languages they didn't know, and that Peter's very first sermon was so great.

Peter, an uneducated Galilean fisherman, just seven weeks removed from denying Jesus with curses, stands up not only to preach, but to preach a great sermon. It even had three points and he had never been to seminary.

By the way, your past sin doesn't have to be a barrier to your usefulness to Christ and His work. Our past sin is meant to make us humble in our service and sympathetic to those around us. God only uses sinners, even the chief among sinners. The grace of God covers a multitude of sins.

For Peter to fall so far and to rise so high is clearly the power of God and the wisdom of God. Through Christ we can do all things. Expect great things, attempt great things, in the power of the Spirit and in the wisdom of the Spirit.

Acts 2:14-15, Drunk? Yes and No.

Peter stands up, meaning not just to stand up to be heard, but to stand up to the lie, to the serious charge that they were drunk. Notice Peter's wisdom and maturity, how respectfully he addresses the crowd. "My fellow Jews, this is not that."

"No we are not drunk, in fact, may I be so bold as to say you know that's a ridiculous accusation. We are Jews like you, you should know better. It's not even the time of morning prayer yet and our main meal of the day is two hours away and we don't drink wine before a

meal. Even people who get drunk don't normally get drunk at 9 am. This is not that, this is not the effects of alcohol, but the effects of being full of the Holy Spirit."

Let me pause here to remind you that even the clearest manifestations of the power and wisdom of God will be met with criticism and mocking. People are becoming bolder in their attacks and accusations against Christianity.

If someone mocks, if someone lies, if someone twists the truth, what should we say or do? Follow the example of Peter, stand up for your faith, stand up for Jesus, respectfully, clearly, trusting the Holy Spirit in you to help you.

Acts 2:17-18//Joel 2:28-29, What Joel said, this is that.

"Listen to me, pay careful attention, something of highest importance has just happened. Your human explanation isn't enough, isn't even close. You can't interpret this from an earthly perspective. You're going to need spiritual help to understand this.

"Let me tell you what has happened. The Word of the living God has come true and has come to life before your very eyes. A prophecy has been fulfilled.

"This is what you have been waiting for, longing to see come to pass. If you knew your OT you would know what this is." In the KJV Peter says, "***This is that*** which was uttered by the prophet Joel."

The first Christian sermon was Biblical, it was an expository sermon. No pop psychology, no stories or funny jokes or video clips from movies. He takes the OT and explains how it is relevant to today.

There are three things you need to know about what Joel said.

It's a new day and it's a new experience and it's a new twist on an old message.

"The last days" that for Joel were in the future are now. This is the dawning of a ***new day***, a new age, the age of the Holy Spirit. Jesus the Messiah ushered in the last days with His coming and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is proof that we are in the last days. We have been in them now for two thousand years and they will last until Jesus comes again.

But let's be clear about this long season of waiting for Jesus to come. We are living in the age when our Lord and Savior is King and He is on His throne. He isn't elected, He can't be voted out or impeached. Our King, the leader of our party is on the throne and in office.

It's a new day and it still is. It's a ***new experience*** as well. But what's new about this experience? People in the OT had the Spirit, Moses, Samson, Samuel, David, Isaiah. And they

prophesied and had dreams and visions. So what's new? God says in this new day, "I will pour out my Spirit on *all flesh*." This is that.

What does that mean? Does it mean on every single person on the planet? No, God is not indiscriminate, God sees and judges hearts. This doesn't mean the inner condition of a person doesn't matter. It means the outward status of the person doesn't matter.

The Spirit is not just poured out on 70, not just on 120, not just on men, not just on Jews, not just on certain ones, but on any and all who believe. All people have access to the Spirit of the living God. This new presence and new power and new giftedness and new fruit and new life are not bound up or limited or restricted.

Sons and daughters, men and women, young and old, free and slaves, people of all classes and walks of life. It will be a worldwide phenomenon.

Acts 2:39 For the promise [of the Holy Spirit] is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

Let me tell you a story about Moses. Long before Joel prophesied this, Moses prayed for it.

One day God told Moses to select 70 men from among the elders and have them come outside the camp to the tent of meeting and He would come down and take some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on them. But two men, Eldad and Medad, stayed inside the camp and were prophesying by the Spirit.

Someone came running to Moses to tattle on them and Joshua, Moses assistant, said to Moses "My lord Moses, forbid them." You have got to stop this, nip it in the bud before it gets out of control. But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:28-29).

May God give that Spirit to all the people. Would that all the lay people were empowered by God and gifted and equipped to do ministry, willing to go and give and serve and pray for other.

We say we believe in the priesthood of all believers, meaning in the spiritual ministry of the whole body of Christ, not just the pastors or elders or deacons.

There should be a prophethood of all believers. By the Spirit Christians edifying and building up, encouraging, speaking good words, giving a word from the Lord.

I Corinthians 14:3 The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

Are we afraid of this, do we feel timid, are we so worried about what others will say or think? Why are we so quiet about spiritual things? Why do I hear over and over again about older generations who walked their faith but said very little about it? Especially the men.

I hear people in this generation say they are not being like their parents when it comes to showing affection, giving hugs and kisses, saying I love you. But are we still being like our parents in not talking about our faith, about the Bible, about spiritual and eternal things?

Pray, ask for the Spirit to remove the barriers, the fears, the hindrances, ask the Spirit to do such an inner work that it just begins to flow and come out.

And notice the Spirit won't be doled out or measured out or rationed, He will be *poured out*. This isn't your average PNW drizzly day, not even a shower, this is a tropical rainforest deluge. A frog strangler. God is a God of abundance, of generosity, of excess. There is nothing miserly about God. He wants more for us than we want for yourselves, more than we ask or imagine.

This is God's promise in the last days. Things will get rough, bad things will happen, evil and wickedness will become rampant, persecution will increase, but God promises to pour out His Holy Spirit with great power during this time. Ask Him for more.

You won't just know God, you won't just have some understanding of who He is or even just believe in Him, you will be overwhelmed by His presence and power, He will dwell in you.

Like the boy walking hand in hand with his dad, who suddenly scoops him up and gives him a bear hug and kisses and whispers I really love you.

God desires to be known, He gives us His Spirit that we might have a true encounter with Him. God created us to be able to walk with Him in the garden in the cool of the evening, and by His Spirit He means to recreate that opportunity and experience.

By His Spirit He says to us, "You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased." He isn't just the judge of the world, He is the lover of our souls, and only by His Spirit can we know that love.

He gives us His Spirit of adoption that we might say, "Abba, Father." That is a generous Father, a loving Father. Not cool, not distant, not remote, not absent, not fearful, but Abba, Father.

Acts 2:19-21//Joel 2:30-32, call on the Lord.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

It is an old message, Joel preached it. But Peter will preach it with a twist. It's what's coming next in his sermon. The Lord is Jesus. If you really want to understand what is happening you have to understand Jesus.

This is the point. Don't miss the point. The point isn't the wind, the fire, the tongues.

This is what it is all about. This is the object of God's plan, what He is up to. God's plan is to save, to rescue, to deliver, to redeem all those who call on the name of Jesus.

Do you realize your privileged place in salvation history? You weren't in the four thousand plus years before Christ. Men as great as Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel longed to know what we know and they searched their Scriptures to know it.

You aren't an angel in heaven who can only look on from a great distance and with no personal firsthand experience. Gabriel and Michael long to know what we know.

This is no small thing, no average salvation. Treasure this gift and make much of it with your children, with friends and colleagues, with anyone who will listen to you.

Implications and application.

So if we are still part of this new day in which there are new experiences, where are the dreams and visions, the prophecy, the signs and wonders?

They are happening all over the world. There are especially many reports coming out of Muslim countries of people receiving dreams and visions of Jesus. *Von* met such a woman in Macedonia when he was there last month. For 24 years her faith was kept alive by a vision she received until God brought another Christian into her life. She was sort of like Anna in the temple, waiting for God to bring the consolation of the vision she had.

There are at least a dozen books on Amazon filled with stories of a staggering number of Muslims being introduced to Jesus through visions and dreams, despite living in cultures where converting to Christianity can mean death.

Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling In Love with Jesus, Jerry Troutsdale, 2012.

Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World? Tom Doyle, 2012.

A Wind In The House Of Islam: How God Is Drawing Muslims Around The World To Faith In Jesus Christ. David Garrison, 2014.

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity. Nabeel Qureshi, 2016.

God is up to something. God has been and always is up to something. He sends out His Spirit into all the earth, He sends out His Word and it accomplishes the purposes for which He sends it.

He sent His Word out with Joel and it did not return void. God is faithful to all His promises.

When God gets ready to do a new thing, He starts by laying a foundation in prayer. He gathers people to pray and prepare. God is doing that in Whatcom County.

There are nations that still need a Pentecost. There are people groups that can't call on the name of the Lord because there are no Christians in their midst.

Tim and Becky have been working for years to identify who these people are and where they are. They have identified 31 Frontier people groups of 10 million or more people, 31 groups that total 882 million (almost a billion) where there are less than one tenth of one percent of believers.

On Saturday June 2 at the Ferndale Retreat Center the Tim and Von and Jason of the Light of the World Prayer Center are holding a day of prayer for the 31 Frontier people groups to ask the Lord of the harvest to send harvesters to these people for the sake of Jesus. The Spirit of God will bring the Word of God to the people of God.

Booklets/flyers are available on the table in the narthex.

Every movement of God, every pouring out of the Spirit begins with prayer, whether in our own hearts or in our homes or community or school or nation. He gives generously to all who ask.

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit. Prepare our hearts and lives to receive your fullness, that we might know you and love you and obey you and be your bold witnesses for the sake of Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.