

**Grace, mercy, and peace are yours in abundance. Amen.**

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.<sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.<sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.<sup>6</sup> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.<sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?”<sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?<sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,<sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome<sup>11</sup> (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”<sup>12</sup> Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”<sup>13</sup> Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.<sup>15</sup> These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!<sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ”<sup>17</sup> ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.<sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.<sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.<sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.<sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ **This is God’s Word.**

**Dear Friends,**

Today we celebrate the Day of Pentecost. The Day of Pentecost is often associated with the start of the New Testament Church. You might remember some of your Bible Story pictures that show the disciples with little flames above their heads, but Pentecost was also the name for one of the Old Testament festivals which God commanded the Children of Israel to celebrate. It was a festival of thanksgiving for the harvest and was celebrated in what we think of as the season of spring because that is when Grain is harvested in Israel.

As we consider this festival of Pentecost, it is interesting to note how the Old Testament, Jewish festivals coincide with the life of Christ. On a day when the Israelites were looking for a Passover lamb, Jesus rode into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday). On the day when the Israelites were concerned with slaughtering and eating their Passover lamb, Jesus hung on the cross as our Passover Lamb (Good Friday). On the day when the Israelites brought the first sheaf of the barley harvest, the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Passover, Jesus rose from the dead as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (Easter). On the day when the Israelites brought the first fruits of their wheat harvest to the Lord, the first gathering of souls into the church took place (Pentecost).

And so today, as we consider this Day of Pentecost, we see that it is **“God’s Gift to the Church.”** As we consider this gift, Let us see the **“Miracle of this Gift,”** and also **“The Message of This Gift.”**

**I.** Pentecost is God’s gift. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told the disciples to go to Jerusalem to wait for the gift God had promised and which Jesus had spoken about. The disciples didn’t know when that gift would come. They didn’t know how long they would have to wait, but they trusted Jesus. Luke tells us that while they were waiting they spent their time rejoicing; praising God and worshipping at the temple.

On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were all together in a house. When we think of a house, we think of the place where we live, but the disciples may have been at another house, the Lord’s House: the temple. This was the day when God was going to send His gift; the gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples.

This was no ordinary gift and it did not come in an ordinary way. Luke tells us that first there was a sound like a blowing of a violent wind and then what appeared to be tongues of fire rested on each of the disciple’s heads and the disciples began to speak in languages other than their native tongues. This series of events did not go unnoticed.

Because it was the Old Testament Festival of Pentecost there were God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. They were in Jerusalem because this was one of three festivals they were to celebrate in this special city. It is no coincidence that God chose to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples on this day. Just as God sent Jesus into this world at just the right time, **“when the fullness of time had come,”** so Christ sent the Holy Spirit at just the right time for the New Testament Church to begin in such a way so as to reach a great number of people.

When the crowds heard this great rushing noise, they came together to find out what had caused it and they found the disciples speaking in their native languages. The disciples were declaring the wonders of God to all those around and doing it in many different languages so that all understood what was being said. The people had never seen or heard anything like this before and their reaction was mixed.

They were amazed that they were all able to understand. That God’s Word was being proclaimed in so many languages and at the same time they were perplexed; they were confused because they knew the disciples were from Galilee. These men were uneducated and so how were they able to speak in all these languages? What does all of this mean?

They knew something had just happened, but weren’t quite able to tell what. This truly was a miracle and yet there were some who never even considered that possibility, rather, they applied reason and human logic and came to the conclusion that the disciples must have had too much wine. They were making fun of God and God’s messengers.

At times we are like these men. We don’t recognize the work of the Holy Spirit as the miracle it really is. We don’t always value the gift of salvation that we have. For many of us, the

Holy spirit created faith in our hearts when we were baptized as babies and so it is easy to miss the significance of this miracle. We are too young to remember this working of the Holy Spirit, but take a minute to think about it. We may have been a cute baby but there was nothing that made us attractive to God. We are all born in sin, enemies of God and yet He has sent His Spirit to us through His Word to create faith in our hearts. God did this because He loves us and not because of anything we have done.

Being made a child of God is a miracle in itself but it doesn't end there. Each week as we hear and read God's Word, the Holy Spirit is right here to help us understand it and to strengthen our faith. What a wonderful gift our God has given to us. The Holy Spirit comes to us week after week in the same way as the Holy Spirit came to the disciples giving us an understanding of God's Word, bringing us the spiritual knowledge that our sins are forgiven, and strengthening our faith. Thanks be to God for sending the Miracle of the Spirit into our lives!

This Miracle of the Spirit was **"God's Gift to the Church,"** but as we hear Luke describe the events, we see that the people were perplexed by what was going on. They didn't quite understand this wonderful gift and so Peter stepped up to explain **"The Message of this Gift"** to the people.

**II.** The people had asked, **"What does this all mean?"** Peter begins by quoting the prophet Joel because Joel had prophesied the coming of the Holy Spirit to the New Testament Christians. This will all happen in the "Last Days." The "Last Days" that we are in right now. Jesus has redeemed the sins of the world and has ascended into heaven. The New Testament Era will end when Jesus returns on Judgment Day to take all believers to be with Him in heaven. Joel talks about the signs leading up to Judgment Day.

\*\*\* **God will pour out His Spirit on all mankind** -- That began on Pentecost and continues every day as the Spirit is poured out through the Word.

\*\*\* **Your sons and daughters will prophesy** -- to prophesy is to teach, to speak for another (namely God) and we, as sons and daughters, speak God's Word as we share the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit works through the Word when it is shared.

\*\*\* **Your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams** – As we share the Gospel we have visions of what heaven will be like. We have dreams and visions of how God's Word will work through the church to turn many to Christ.

\*\*\* **I will pour out my Spirit on both men and women.** – The Holy Spirit works through all of us, men and women alike, to share the gospel. You don't have to be a pastor to tell someone about their Savior. God brings His gift of the Spirit to all. This is what we call the universal priesthood of all believers.

Joel prophesied that Pentecost and Judgment Day were connected so He tells us that as Judgment Day approaches there will be signs in the heavens above and on the earth below. Jesus described these signs as famines and earthquakes and great signs in heaven. This is a reminder to us that we are in the "Last Days." There is only one more major event prophesied – Judgment Day.

Not everyone likes to think about Judgment Day. The thought of judgment brings with it the assumption that we will be held accountable and no one wants to be accountable for their sins. We like to boast about the good things we have done, but we don't want anyone to notice our mistakes. That is why Luke reminds us of the **“Message of this gift.”** He writes, **“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** We call on the Lord's name because he paid our debt for our sins – he is accountable for them and it is **“The Miracle of God's Gift.”** that allows us to call on the Lord's name for salvation.

God truly has given the church a great gift by sending the Holy Spirit.

Each day, as we hear or read God's Word, may the Holy Spirit move us to praise God for the miracle of our faith and the message of salvation. Amen