

## Pentecost

May 31, 2020

*Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian Church as the Holy Spirit is poured out on Christ's Church.*

**OLD TESTAMENT READING: Joel 2:28-29** *The gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is so special, God prophesied it already in Joel.*

“And afterward,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your old men will dream dreams,  
your young men will see visions.  
Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

**EPISTLE READING: Acts 2:1-21** *The Spirit comes and moves Peter to preach a stirring sermon on Christ.*

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.” 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. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “ ‘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. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

**GOSPEL: John 16:5-11** *Pentecost is a result of Jesus' prayer and promise.*

“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

**SERMON: 2:1-21**

**IT'S HARVEST TIME!**

***""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. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy." (vv.17-18)***

Why hasn't Jesus returned yet? He promised he would. In the gospels he gives us the signs of the last days—wars, rumors of wars, famines, false prophets, etc.—all of which have been fulfilled. He even told us that God has actually shortened the last days for the sake of the elect. And it would be far better, at least for you and me, if Christ came tonight, if he came at this moment, even before I finish this sermon. It has been almost two thousand years since Jesus' ascension. What is he waiting for? He is waiting for the harvest to be done.

Today is Pentecost Sunday. Pentecost really was a harvest festival or thanksgiving service for the Israelites. And we see from our text that it symbolizes another kind of harvest festival. So, let's remember that it is harvest time. First we will see what was involved in the Old Testament harvest of wheat and then the New Testament harvest of souls.

### *I. The Old Testament harvest of wheat.*

You walk into a small business. On the wall behind the cash register you see a picture frame with a dollar bill inside. You ask the owner the significance of that dollar bill and he says that it was the very first dollar he made in his business. The Lord asked the Israelites to do the same thing. In his Old Testament laws the Lord included one on the firstfruits of the harvest. We have to understand that Israel is in another part of the world, thus their harvest is conducted in the spring and not in the fall like here. When the harvest begins, every Israelite farmer would go out into his fields with his sickle. After the first swipe, he bent over and picked up the very first stalk of grain and set it aside. Soon he would go to Jerusalem for the Passover festival, one of three festivals when all God-fearing Jews would go to the temple in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem he would celebrate the Passover on Thursday and on Sunday he would take his first stalk of grain to the temple as an offering to the Lord. It was offered as thanks that the harvest is beginning.

Then he went home to finish the harvest. First the barley was ready followed by the wheat. After the harvest, all Israelite men were required by God in the Old Testament law to return to Jerusalem again. Known as Pentecost or the Day of the Firstfruits, each Israelite male was to make an offering to the Lord of the firstfruits from the harvest. In fact, the farmer couldn't use any of the grain for personal use until he first made this offering on Pentecost. Now he didn't just go into the barn and grabbed a couple handfuls of grain from the bags. He picked the first and the best of his crops for this offering. And it wasn't a handful. It was 10%.

And that is the situation we have in our text from Acts. It is the feast of Pentecost, exactly 49 days from the day the first grain was brought to Jerusalem, fifty days from the Passover Sabbath, and fifty-one days since the crucifixion of Christ. Now we are told that Israelites had come from all over the known world at that time, and they came for this harvest festival.

There are two things to note from this section. First note how many thousands of Israelites who traveled those hundreds and thousands of miles for this festival. Luke goes out of his way to tell us that they were God-fearing Jews. If there was a Jew who didn't fear or love God, he would not leave home and spend all that time and money going to Jerusalem for some festival. I find this text encouraging. Look at all the people who still believed, feared, and loved the true God. They believed despite the immorality and unbelief of this world.

So it is today. It is true. The church seems in decline. 65% of Americans profess to be Christian; I remember when that number was 90%. Only 40% of them attend church once a month or more. I wonder how many would travel hundreds of miles for a worship service like in our reading let alone come to church every week? It is sad, but we see why. We see all the rampant immorality, false doctrine, and so on out there. Yet, despite all the worldly influences out there, we still find folks who are God fearing. When the prophet Elijah thought all his work was for nothing, God reminded him that 7,000

people still believed in him. A definite minority, but considering how bad things were, that is a miracle. God's Word still works.

Also look at how the firstfruits are given to God. Every head of grain, every blessing is from him, and these festivals reminded people of that. We are no longer bound by these Old Testament laws. But we can still give God the firstfruits of our time, treasure, and talents. We don't take just a handful or the stuff off the floor. We can give to him the first and best of what we have and let everything else fall into place after our offering. What a confession of faith this would be.

## *II. The New Testament harvest of souls.*

So that was the Old Testament harvest of wheat. Let's now look at the New Testament harvest of souls. I was born on the fourth of July. My parents didn't plan it that way; it was a coincidence. But there are no coincidences on God's calendar.

Now there is something interesting about the timing here and it isn't a coincidence. Let's go back to Holy Week before Easter. The day Jesus entered Jerusalem, Palm Sunday, was the day many Israelites picked their Passover lambs. Interesting, the day they picked their lambs, the Lamb of God comes to town. Then on Thursday, Maundy Thursday, when all those lambs were to be slaughtered, Jesus gave us holy communion with his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. By Friday afternoon, Jesus as the Lamb of God was slaughtered on the cross for the sins of the world! That Sunday, when all Israelites were to offer to God the very first stalk of grain from their fields, Jesus rose from the grave, ***"the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*** And now it is Pentecost, the day all Israelites were to bring in the firstfruits of their harvest. On this day we have the firstfruits of the harvest of souls in the New Testament church. Coincidence?

***"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. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."*** Beginning on Pentecost, God pours out his Holy Spirit. A child receives a new toy as a gift. He hurriedly tears open the package and tries to play with it. Nothing happens. "Batteries not included," it says on the package. Without batteries, the toy doesn't work.

Without the Holy Spirit, we would not work. It says in our Gospel reading, ***"When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt . . . in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me."*** The truth is, you and I would not be able to call Jesus Lord without the Holy Spirit. Like batteries he begins to work in our hearts. He first produces guilt. All people feel guilty some of the time. But the Spirit convicts us with God's Law which tell us what is right and wrong, what is holy and not holy. And his guilt is special. It leads us to repentance. We see we are trapped and we cry out to God for help. But he isn't done there.

***" . . . your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams."*** This is not referring to trance like visions or dreams or direct revelations as some assume. This tells us we will see things we never saw before. We see these things in God's Word. For example, look at Revelation. That vision God gave to John he gives to all of us. We see the same visions and dreams through him. What else do we see in his Word? We see a Savior. Without Christ and without the Holy Spirit the most man could ever dream of is to gain a few moments of pleasure before we die. But in God's Word we see open tombs, the throne of God and we see all the saints glorifying him. From the Bible we dream of a time and place where there will be no more weeping, mourning, or pain.

***"Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."*** Because of the Holy Spirit, everyone will be made a prophet. Remember, prophecy means to speak out, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, every man, woman, and child now has the ability to speak about Jesus and confess him.

***"And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*** And that brings us to our church. This church isn't just a storage barn of harvested souls. It is a place believers show their faith as they call on the name of the Lord. It is also the base of operations for harvesters. Jesus remarked how the harvest

is ripe and plentiful, but the harvesters are few. We harvest by opening God's Word and letting the Holy Spirit work. We open the Bible here so we can see visions and dreams. We open that Bible to our kids and parents so they can see. We can open that Bible for our neighbor so he can see the visions and dreams we see. If you do, guess what? You are a prophet.

It is good to see the fields planted. Thank God for that. But what are you waiting for? It's harvest time. No, don't go out and start running your combines over the fields now. You will ruin your plants. I am talking about the harvest of souls. The New Testament age began with the firstfruits of souls on that first Pentecost, but they were just the firstfruits. More is coming. Let's harvest them. INJ Amen.