**Acts 2:1-4,14a,33-36** June 9, 2019

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Pentecost Sunday

*Acts 2:1When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them… 14Then 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…*

*33“Exalted to the right hand of God, [Jesus] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand 35until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” ’ 36Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

Dear Friends in Christ,

**The Gift of the Holy Spirit**

**I. A Gift Given through Obedience (How Did They Get It?)**

You ever have someone surprise you—pleasantly, that is? You know there is work to be done. He said that he would be by to help, but you just know that he isn’t going to be there. So you pull up—and there he is! There even before you and he says, “So what took you so long?” Now, truth be told, you actually resemble The Grinch and you feel a little upset that he has taken away your reason to be grouchy for the rest of the day. Then you feel ashamed for doubting him. Finally, after a minute or two your heart is lifted high and you are so thankful for him and the blessing he is. You never expected it. But there he was.

That’s how I felt about the disciples while I sat and thought about the beginning of our reading.

If you have been regularly going to church for a few years, you have heard this reading from Acts chapter two 10, 20, 60 times. It is the appointed reading for *every* Pentecost. It *is* Pentecost. When you hear something that often, you and I stop listening. “Yes, dear.” “What’d I just say?” “Umm…”

***“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.”*** Well, of course they were. It’s Pentecost. That’s the way the story goes. Disciples, upper room, rushing wind, flickering flames, etc.

That’s exactly why a pastor has to *study* the text every week. Because just like everyone else, we take stuff for granted, especially stuff we have heard a few dozen times.

When you stop to think of it, we didn’t really expect to find the disciples there. I know, I know. Jesus had told them to be there. But you know these disciples. They were from days away, up north in Galilee. They had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover. Meanwhile Jesus was executed and rose from the dead. After a couple weeks, they returned to Galilee. Somehow, a few weeks later, Jesus got his disciples to walk back down to Jerusalem—again. Then Jesus ascended into heaven and just left them standing there on a hilltop. There they are, Galileans, a couple days’ journey from home, down in Jerusalem for the second time in just over a month, itchin’ to get back home. And Jesus, just before he left them, had told them, “And don’t go home. Wait in Jerusalem.”

Imagine going down to Atlanta for a church gathering this weekend. And you go, and you come back. And then somehow, someone gets you to make *another* journey to Atlanta for *another* church gathering next month. After a couple days down there you are thinking, “I sure do like sleeping in my own bed,” but someone says, “Stay in Atlanta till I tell you you can go.” And you wait: one day, two days, three days. “Jesus, when can I go home?” No answer. Four days, eight days. How long are you going to wait?

These disciples had so much wrong in their minds, in their thinking. Just about the last time they saw Jesus, they asked, “Are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?” They had virtually no clue what the kingdom of God really was. No, I did not expect to find 120 of them crowded into this little room in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

But they listened to Jesus. They may have not understood. They may have had their misunderstandings. But when Jesus told them, *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised…”* they obeyed! God give us that obedience, even when we don’t really understand! That obedience was the connecting point between these disciples and the Holy Spirit’s Pentecost gift.

**II. Clear Thinking about the Pentecost Gift (What Is It?)**

Now we must clarify a few points about the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

There are two completely different classes of gifts the Holy Spirit gives. Please listen to two Bible passages that I hope can clarify our thinking about the Holy Spirit’s gifts.

The first one is from 1 Corinthians chapter 12. This is such an important passage that it should be on every Christian’s short list of Bible passages they know by heart: *“No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”* (12:3) This passage summarizes the Bible truth that we cannot have the faith to be saved apart from God’s Holy Spirit. He must work that faith in our hearts. Faith is the initial, the greatest, gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit not only gives us life, he also enriches our life. As it says in that same chapter: *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good…”* [and he goes through a long list of spiritual gifts and concludes,] *“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines”* (7-11). These things do not save us. They are gifts over and above the spiritual life the Holy Spirit gives. The Holy Spirit does more than merely take us from lost and condemned sinners to being sons of God. He enriches our spiritual life.

We can point out this distinction in a life example we know well: Parents give life to a child. But woe to those parents who think that they have completed their job the day a child is born. They have only begun! It is self-evident that they can’t give any other gifts if that child does not have life. The gift of life is the essential gift. Others can be tremendously important, but not *that* important.

This is important because there are people out there, and not just on the fringes of Christianity, but people with enough of a following to be on television who confuse this. They say that every real Christian will, must!, experience something like what these Pentecost disciples experienced. They imply that you aren’t a real Christian if the Holy Spirit doesn’t give you some outstanding gift over and above the gift of faith. But remember that word of God, *“the Holy Spirit gives them to each one, just as he determines.”* Remember that the most precious gift, without which none of the rest matter, is saving faith in your Savior Jesus.

So when you think of that strange gift of speaking in other languages, what you are seeing is the Holy Spirit giving those additional gifts. He is giving additional gifts to already saved men and women.

It is worth mentioning that this spectacular gifts of speaking in other languages is seen only three times in the Bible. Each time it was a gift of God given when the Gospel of Jesus Christ crossed a new threshold. Here in Acts 2 when Jesus’ disciples first became his apostles, his messengers. Again in Acts 10 when the very first non-Jews became Christians, and in Acts 19 where followers of John the Baptist first learned of Jesus. We do not hear of the gift of tongues as an ongoing phenomenon in Christian churches.

**III. A Gift Given for a Purpose (What’s It Worth?)**

Having said that, let us think about what the Holy Spirit’s gift is worth.

As Pentecost day progresses, one thing becomes obvious. The Holy Spirit’s gift is not meant to be a circus side-show. There is a purpose. The purpose is not so that Jesus’ disciples can stand up and take a bow or live in luxury. There is a higher purpose. That higher purpose is heard in the words the Apostle Peter spoke. He said, ***“Exalted to the right hand of God, [Jesus] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear… Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”***

The Holy Spirit’s gift was poured out to give glory to Jesus.

Peter boldly, without apology, explains who Jesus was and draws a line in the sand, ***“God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*** Jesus is “Lord.” That is an old idea, an old concept that we don’t put much stock in these days. “Jesus is Lord” calls to mind a time of kings and queens, when there were people who had a right and claim on your life. You had a certain degree of freedom, but you served them. ***“Jesus is Lord”*** is a statement that he has a right to direct my life, to expect certain things of me, because I am his.

Peter called Jesus ***“Christ.”*** “Christ” is not a name. It is a title. It literally means “Anointed One”, but we don’t anoint people any more. So maybe our closest approximation is ***“Chosen One.”*** Jesus is God’s Chosen One. Getting to heaven isn’t a freestyle event. Jesus is the only way. All others shall be disqualified.

Listen again to Peter, equipped and emboldened by the Holy Spirit, when he says, ***“God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*** It is the territory of no compromises. Either you trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior, or you are lost. Either you admit that you have nothing without Jesus, and that he has a right to everything you are, or you are lost. That is the Apostle Peter’s Holy Spirit-given message.

But Peter made a crucial mistake. He said, ***“this Jesus, whom you crucified.”*** He laid the death of Jesus at their feet.

Living in this day of gotcha politics, we see his blunder. In this day and age we can dig up things that people said or texted forty years ago. Did you see the Heisman trophy winner a few months ago? On the day of being awarded this trophy for superb achievement, someone went and found some of his texts as a 14-year-old and paraded them around national news on the greatest day of his life. Some people take great pleasure in digging up people’s past and destroying them. “You talk a big game now, but what about this… You sound like a hypocrite. You have lost any respectability. You have no right to talk. Take that.”

Someone could have done that to the Apostle Peter here. “Hey, Peter, you blame us for crucifying Jesus. You make us look bad, but what about you? When Jesus was on trial, you denied him. You turned your back on him, not once, but three times. We may not have video evidence, but we have this servant girl from the high priest’s courtyard who says…”

It was all still fresh in Peter’s own mind, only six weeks previous to Pentecost. But that is the point of what Peter is saying. His message isn’t about being decent or rotten people. (That’s what some people think the Christian message is.) It wasn’t about them or him being a decent or rotten people. It isn’t about a code of conduct. It is about a Savior. Do you know what “Savior” means? It means that we are in big big trouble! It means that we can’t save ourselves. It means that we are lost and condemned creatures.

Pointing people to a Savior was the point of the Holy Spirit’s gift on this day. And so Peter could preach to them about their sins and their Savior in the humble confidence of a sinner who had also been saved. It is the same reason that we can confidently speak of sin and a Savior.

And maybe you remember: on that Pentecost day we are told that 3,000 people were baptized.

The gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day, the gift of special Spirit-given abilities, was given to obedient believers. That gift served a purpose, not for those men and women—sorry, but if you want the gift of the Spirit so you can feel good about yourself, that’s not what it is for—but that others might know about a Savior, a Lord and Christ. Which is exactly what happened. The gift of speaking in tongues was given so that the Holy Spirit’s first gift, the gift of faith could be given to thousands. Amen.