

Pentecost - The Completion of the Harvest

Hello Dear Listeners;

Pentecost, you may not even find it mentioned on your calendar. Yet for the Jews in the days when Jesus was on earth it was a very important day. It followed on the heels of the Passover, that most important feast celebrating the deliverance of God's people from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, by God's hand.

Then came Pentecost, the "fiftieth-day feast" marking the celebration of the beginning of the early weeks of the wheat harvest. So it celebrated the bountiful blessings that were a consequence of God's work of deliverance. God had granted Israel not only freedom but poured out on them rich treasures. Treasures of life, Yet treasures that yet would be crowned, completed, fulfilled.

Why? Because God does not leave his work undone, his promises left hanging. Of old He had promised to pour out His Holy Spirit. That the riches of Christ, His spiritual blessings of life and light and faith and hope might go out to all the nations.

That's why in the book of Acts, ch. 2:1 we can read, literally, "*When the day of Pentecost was fulfilled, or completed, they, (that is the disciples) were all together in one place.*"

It is then that the Holy Spirit made his arrival felt in a powerful, amazing way.

For suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Not only that but the disciples 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 languages as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2: 2-4).

These signs of this tornado-like wind and those “tongues as of fire” were indications of the presence of Almighty God. God who was at work fulfilling His promise concerning blessings that were to come.

It is the Holy Spirit, whom the Christian church confesses to be “ *The Lord and Giver of Life*” (Nicene Creed) who was at work that day. Did the Passover find its fulfilment in Christ’s work of deliverance on Golgotha? Did Christ’s resurrection signal “new life” for all who believe?

The Holy Spirit opened the way for a flood of blessings to be poured out on us. For He opened the hearts of people then, as he does today, that He might dwell in us. That we might bring forth what the bible calls “ The fruits of the Spirit”: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* (Galatians 5: 22)

I once heard someone has reverently calling the Holy Spirit, “ The Finishing Carpenter”. He’s the One who molds the lives of believers after God’s will. He’s the Counselor, the Sanctifier, ‘par excellence’ preparing the lives of believers for the day of Christ’s return when the Grand Culmination of all of God’s promises comes to fruition and completion.

Someone¹ has likened the day of Pentecost to the colourful ribbon-cutting ceremony that takes place when a new building is opened for all to enter.

¹ Rev. Klaas Stam in Celebrating Salvation p. 218

Such a ceremony is not repeated. Neither is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It was “Once, for all!”

So how do you and I receive the rich and lasting gifts of the Spirit? How do we get to make the fruits of the Spirit our own? By embracing the testimony of that Spirit, God’s Holy Word with believing hearts. By glorifying Christ and His Spirit together with God’s people.

On the day when the Holy Spirit came down He filled that house where the disciples were for a purpose. For the next thing we read is that they proclaimed the Gospel. The Gospel of the resurrected Christ. Right away that Gospel and those who proclaimed it met with opposition. There were those who ridiculed the speakers accusing them of being drunk. “What?” said Peter in effect, “*At nine in the morning?*” Instead he pointed out that what they heard and saw was fulfilment. Fulfilment of the prophecy of that man Joel, in the Old Testament. For he was the one who had been a messenger to God’s people. To tell them the day would come when God would pour out His Spirit, “On all people” so that their sons and daughters would prophesy and their young men would see visions, their old men, dream dreams. (Joel 2: 28-30, and Acts 2: 17).

The apostle Peter, led by the Holy Spirit made liberal use of the prophecy of Joel as well as that of the psalmist David. That he might drive home the very glad tidings concerning Jesus Christ the Resurrected and ascended Lord. Then Peter said, “*Therefore, lest all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2: 36).

Dear listeners, Pentecost is only possible because of Golgotha. It is on the cross that Jesus Christ finished what He came to accomplish, namely to die for the sins of all those who believe.

Long ago, God's people were directed to the temple, a grand building, made of stones. God had promised, "For evermore I there, will dwell". But now that temple is gone, in fact as Jesus said not one stone was left on the other!

But now there is a temple made up of living stones. It is the church of Jesus Christ which He continues to gather, to defend and even enlarge. He is present there with His Holy Spirit, when His people are gathered there every Lord's Day around the preaching of the Gospel. It is there that His wondrous blessings of the forgiveness of sins are proclaimed. It is there that His office bearers are ordained and appointed to their important offices.

Yet even then, the feast of Pentecost is not completed yet! For the Word goes out to the nations. That many will be pulled out of the bleakness and darkness of sin and misery and be joined to the body of Christ. They do so honoring Christ's own directive, "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" (Matthew 28: 19) "Therefore", because all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Christ. Because the Holy Spirit will complete the work He has undertaken. He would teach the nations the meaning of true freedom and lasting riches. He would teach you and me, and children yet unborn. For He desires the fulness of the harvest. He would plant the seed of the Gospel in the hearts of many. That you and I might bring forth those fruits of the Spirit.

Therefore give thanks and truly celebrate Pentecost. For the Holy Spirit is here to stay. His is not a fleeting appearance. By His presence, His holy, 'working presence' he unites believers to Jesus Christ so that they have lasting fellowship, true communion with Him.

Well then, let us not scoff at His presence and His work. May you too be led by the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit. May we shudder to think of grieving the Spirit by means of unbelief and a dismissal of His Word. Instead let us rejoice and sing:

Spirit of all understanding'
of all grace, mod truth, and prayer,
show the paths of life unending;
always guide us, everywhere.
May we say, yes, " Abba, Father,"
say of Jesus, " You are Lord,"
and praise you with one accord,
Be where Christ His churches gathers,
take the offerings that they bring,
hear them when Your praise they sing.

For Christ's sake, Amen, and thank you so much for listening.