

SAME SPIRIT...SAME RESULTS.

Pentecost – June 6/9, 2019

The sermon is based on the two readings for Pentecost, Acts 2:1-21 and John 14:25-27. Due to the length of the readings, they are not printed here.

Dear Christian Friends:

“Grand opening! Door prizes. Live entertainment. Free popcorn, hot dogs, and soda. Petting zoo and face painting for kids. Super-deep discounts. One day only.” When a new store opens, it makes a big splash. The store tries to draw in as many people as possible on its first day of business.

Well, you could say the day of Pentecost was the first day the Holy Christian Church was open for business. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit made a big splash. Our text says, **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.**

Violent wind, tongues of fire, preaching in other languages—what a spectacle that must have been. The Holy Spirit did all these signs so that people would pay attention to what the disciples had to say. We find a summary of that message a few verses after our text. Saint Peter said to the people, **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”**

Peter’s sermon basically said, “The Holy Christian Church is open for business. Come and join Christ’s Church on earth through repentance and baptism. Believe in Jesus as God’s one and only Son—crucified, dead, and risen from the dead to give life and salvation to everyone who believes in him. And it doesn’t matter who you are or where you come from. Everyone is welcome to believe in Jesus and join his Church.”

That message had a powerful result. Acts chapter 2 also tells us, **Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.** So, the day of Pentecost ended as amazingly as it started. The Holy Spirit brought three thousand people to faith in Jesus. So, the first day the Church was “open for business” was a spectacular success.

But we don't see those kinds of spectacles anymore, do we? Our foreign missionaries don't instantly speak a new language the moment they step foot inside a new country. I don't think any church—or even any denomination—gets three thousand new members on a single day. And if a violent wind and tongues of fire suddenly appeared in our church, we would run for the doors and call 911.

No, church today is not the flashy, razzle-dazzle spectacle of Pentecost. That can lead us to think, “I wish church were more exciting. Wouldn't it be great to see the presence of the Holy Spirit like they did on Pentecost? Wouldn't it be great to hear the Holy Spirit like they did on Pentecost? And wouldn't it be great if three thousand—or, may even just three hundred—OK, maybe even just thirty new members joined our church on one day?”

But that's not what we get, is it? Going to church is fairly tame and predictable. Sure, we sing different hymns every week, but they are generally all the same kind of hymns. And sure, we use a variety of liturgies. But, there again, it's the same basic outline. And sure, we hear a different sermon every week—and sometimes we get guest preachers. But, all Lutheran sermons are pretty much the same. *I sin. God still loves me. Jesus died for me. Be good. I'm going to heaven. Amen.* So, yeah, our church services are solid and theologically correct. But, wouldn't it be great if all our church services were as exciting as that day of Pentecost?

Wouldn't that be great? Well, no. No, it would not be great if every one of our services were like Pentecost. Here's why. If every church service were like Pentecost, then the violent wind, the tongues of fire, the foreign language preaching, and the mass conversions would become routine. And then we would complain about that routine and how nothing ever changes.

But there's another reason why the Holy Spirit chose to have only one day like Pentecost. To understand why, think of that store's grand opening again. Let's say you went to the store's grand opening. But you did not actually go into the store. There was just too much excitement outside. But then, a few days later, you did go into the store. As soon as you enter the store, you notice something strange. All the shelves are empty. There is nothing in the store at all. No merchandise for sale. No cashiers. Nothing.

So, it would be foolish for a store to pull out all the stops at its "Grand Opening," but then not actually sell anything. That's because the real purpose of any store is not to have grand openings. The real purpose of any store is to sell stuff. The grand openings and other promotions only serve to get people to notice what the store is selling.

Well, that describes the Holy Spirit's work on Pentecost. Now, don't get me wrong. I don't want to sell the Holy Spirit short. Far from it. What the Holy Spirit did on Pentecost was truly amazing. However, all those signs were never meant to be the substance—the real thing that Christianity is all about. So, what does the store of the Holy Christian Church have 'for sale?' What is Christianity all about? Saint Peter quotes the prophet Joel and says, **And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'**

Saved. Saved from God's anger and punishment. Saved by the forgiveness of all your sins. Saved because the blood of Christ wipes away guilt and shame. Saved for a life in God's joy and eternal peace. That's what Christianity is all about—being saved. Jesus puts it this way in our Gospel Lesson, **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."**

That supernatural peace—the peace of Christ that calms troubled hearts and fills us with hope. That's the peace you get when you **call on the name of the Lord**. And how do you call on the name of the Lord? You call on God's name when you have faith. And how do you get faith? Well, The Holy Spirit gives you faith by proclaiming God's Word to you. Jesus says in our Gospel lesson, **the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send**

in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Now, concerning this work of the Holy Spirit, allow me to compare the Holy Christian Church to a store one more time. This time the store is not empty. It's full of quality merchandise at affordable prices. But outside there are no balloons, live bands, petting zoos, or free popcorn. There's not a whole lot of excitement. But in the store, you find an abundance of high-quality merchandise that you truly need.

Well, that's what the Holy Spirit is doing inside the church today. The Holy Spirit is supplying what you need. In church the Holy Spirit calls you back to your baptism with repentance and sorrow over your sinful, wicked habits. In church the Holy Spirit supplies your faith with the peace of Christ that comes from his full and free forgiveness of all your sins. In church the Holy Spirit furnishes you with God's Word, this Word that is **useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that..you, the people of God,..are equipped for every good work.** And week after week, in church the Holy Spirit connects you to Christ and all his blessings with the sacrament of Holy Communion.

So, when it comes to comparing the exciting day of Pentecost and our normal, regular, predictable church services, we can say, **SAME SPIRIT...SAME RESULTS.** Yes, the same Holy Spirit who made a big splash on the day of Pentecost is also at work every time we gather to worship. And here in our church, the same Holy Spirit produces the exact same results that he did on Pentecost. Those results? **Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. AMEN.**