­“Pentecost”

May 15, 2016

Acts 2:1-11

When was the last time you attended a birthday celebration? Across the world we bring gifts. And here in the US we have cake and ice cream. Just last month on April 21st, the Queen of England celebrated her 90th birthday. And just this past week on Friday, Betty Christopher celebrated her 89th birthday. What is so important about a birthday that we celebrate it?

Well, today is Pentecost Sunday. Pentecost. You’ve heard the word and you’ve read it in the Bible. But, what does it mean? And why is it on the Christian calendar? And why does the Christian Church celebrate it? And, most impor-tantly, does it make any difference to your spiritual life? Now, did you know that Pentecost is a birthday celebration? I’ve titled today’s sermon “Pentecost.” Shall we pray?

Please open your Bible with me to Acts 2. You may have completely missed this. Easter arrived this year on March 27th. And you would have expected Passover to *precede* Easter. But it did not. Passover was celebrated on April 22nd. Then today, May 15th we celebrate Pentecost Sunday.

Please open your Bible today to Acts chapter two and to what actually happened on that first Pentecost after Jesus was crucified? Look with me at Acts 2:1 *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”*

Now, granted, Pentecost is not as popular as Christmas or Easter. But, did you know that Pentecost is the birthday of the Church?

We celebrate the birthday of Jesus. We celebrate the crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday and the resurrection of Jesus on Resurrection Sunday. The Bible tells us that Jesus ascended into Heaven forty days after His resurrection. Acts 1:3 *“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:…”*

Ten days later we find the birthday of the Church. But, it’s easy to forget the birthday of the Church.

Now, how do we know that it was ten days later? The word “Pentecost” means “fiftieth.” Pentecost, as you are about to see, is the fiftieth day after Passover. And, according to the OT, we find that Pentecost always arrived on a Sunday, the one closest to the fiftieth day after the Passover Sabbath.

So, Pentecost Sunday takes us back in history to the first day of the Church. And here’s what happened on that first day; verse two. Acts 2:2 *“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. (3) And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*

 Here’s the birthday of the Church. The people who gathered that day to celebrate Pentecost were quote *“filled with the Holy Ghost.”*

God is always on time. And God, not always, but often, does things in a big way. Now, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, arrived; which simply means that He came for the first time to dwell inside the spirit of every Believer in Jesus Christ.

Everyone who had believed on Jesus and had received Him as their Savior and LORD, had an extremely significant event take place in their lives. Pentecost is the day when every Believer began to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That’s what happened on Pentecost. And that’s what we call the birthday of the Church.

You see, the implication is as clear as anything. Christians are those who are indwelt by the Spirit. If you are part of the Church, you have the Holy Spirit living within you.

Now, I will get to the practical side of today’s celebration in just a moment. But consider how important this is. A child of God; someone who is born of God; has God living within him or her. A truly amazing event occurred that first post-crucifixion Pentecost. Believers from that day to this one celebrate the experience of God living in them in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

So, when I ask you the question. Does Pentecost make any difference to your spiritual life? You bet it does. The Spirit came to live in the ones who follow Jesus. This is nothing short of miraculous. You and I are living, walking, breathing miracles. Someone has taken up residence within you. So, yes, Pentecost has made a huge difference in your life and in mine.

Now, that day was extremely extraordinary. Let me show you why. Verse two tells us that there was a sound; but not just any sound. It was just like the sound of a mighty rushing wind.

I’m sure you’ve experienced such a sound. You’ve heard it in the trees when the wind blows. You’ve heard it when a storm is coming. Somehow God made sound a huge part of that birthday that day. And the sound filled the house where the Believers were seated.

Sound is the effect the wind had on them. And sound is simply a vibration. You hear it in my voice or in a violin or a piano or when someone sings.

But the Bible says it was a sound like a mighty rushing wind. We are left with our imagination to understand just what happened that day.

Then, at that same moment, something appeared. Not only did the coming of the Holy Spirit have sound. It also have sight.

Acts 2:3 *“And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.”*

Here is sound that sounds like a mighty rushing wind. Now we have something that looks like fire. Folks, whatever occurred that day was huge; a very loud sound and then each person present had something that looked just like fire standing upon them.

When God began His Church, He did it with a glorious display of sound and fire. Now, usually what happens in a forest fire, especially if it’s a huge fire, it a huge sound. So, I am going to imagine that this was a huge event that first Pentecost Sunday.

And why? What was happening? Consider this. God, the living God, the Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, chose to do something so far beyond the ordinary, people still have a difficult time believing it today. God came to living inside the spirit of those who received Christ as their LORD and Savior.

Now, before I go any further, let me ask you this. Since that day to this, every person who has come to Christ is now indwelt by the Holy Spirit. No, there’s no sound like a mighty rushing wind. No, there’s no look-alike flames that appears upon the top of your head. But a huge occurs inside every person who becomes a Believer in Christ.

Folks, nothing is more important when it comes to Christians being connected to other Christians. That same Spirit Who came to indwell the Apostles and their friends that day has come to indwell you and me.

We should be falling down in awe of God for such a miracle. We should be so full of worship that we can only say “LORD, You are a mighty God. Your Holy Spirit has come to live in me. I’m a Holy Spirit indwelt human being. I’m no longer the ordinary me anymore. It’s not just that something has happened to me. Someone has come to live within me.”

The Holy Creator of the universe has come to be with me personally and forever. Every day of my life since the day I was saved, the Spirit indwells me. No, not the noisy Spirit of the first Pentecost. No, not the holy flames of His almighty presence. But the same Spirit that entered into them that day has entered into you and me. Is not God worthy of all your attention and worship?

He arrived with a sound like a mighty rushing wind. He arrived with what looked like flames of fire upon each person there. And since that moment, the Spirit now lives in your spirit and in my spirit.

Please don’t minimize the indwelling of the spirit by making it into something mystical or magical or weird. It’s the truth. And it’s the truth that sets someone free. The world cannot know this Person like you know Him. He has come to you personally. And He now lives in you.

And with whatever you know about the Spirit, give Him yourself, your body, your soul, your very life every day and every hour of every day. He’s in you. He’s with you. He’s alive inside your spirit so that you might know that things that are freely given to you from Heaven.

I Corinthians 2:12 *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”*

The day of Pentecost was and is significant. But, what He has done in your life is *the* most amazing thing ever done to a human being. Don’t neglect Him anymore.

Pentecost, by the way, is a Hebrew word. It means “fiftieth.” And, according to the OT, it refers to the fiftieth day after the Sabbath after Passover. Now, I’ve got to take you back to the OT to see just what God said about Pentecost.

Leviticus 23:10 says this. Leviticus 23:10 *“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: (11)* ***And*** *he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.*

*(12)* *And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord. (13) And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin.*

*(14) And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute forever through-out your generations in all your dwellings.*

*(15)* *And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete (16)* *Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord.”*

The LORD has often required His people to commem-orate specific events throughout the year. One of those days was the celebration of God’s provision. In the case of the OT Pentecost celebration, it was a reminder of the LORD’s blessing upon the crops. That feast He named “The Feast of Weeks.” You might have heard it called Shavuot. And Shavuot is coming up soon. It will be celebrated this year from Saturday, June 11th through Monday, June 13th.

Shavuot has always been a wonderful feast of the Jews. Let me show you what we know from the Bible. Shavuot is, first, a remembrance of the day God gave the Law, the Ten Commandments, to Moses.

Here’s the time for this period of feasts.

First, there’s Passover, the celebration of the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb.

And, before I go any further. Do you know Who the greatest Passover Lamb was and is? Do you know that this wonderful birthday celebration gets its existence from the One Who was sacrificed for you on the Hill called Calvary? I Corinthians 5:7 *“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:…”*

The very next Sunday after Passover was the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a reminder of the Deliverance from Egypt and the Crossing of the Red Sea.

Next comes Shavuot exactly seven weeks after the Exodus and the day that God gave the Law to Moses. And that day; now note this, that day is considered the birthday of the nation of Israel. And, isn’t it just like the LORD to set that very same day as the birthday of the Church of Jesus Christ, His Son, the Jewish Messiah?

On that first Shavuot, on the day that Israel became a nation, Moses sacrificed a lamb and took the blood and sprinkled half of it on the altar and the other half on the people and he said *“Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance to all these words.”* And the Jews responded with *“all that the LORD says we will do and obey.”* Then Moses and the seventy elders of Israel ate a meal signifying they were in full agreement with the Covenant; the Old Covenant; what we call the Old Testament.

And on that day the glory of the LORD appeared in His brilliance. Exodus 24:9 *“Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: (10)* *And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. (11) And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.”*

Then later, when the Jews were in the land, the LORD included the feast of the ingathering of the harvest. Here’s what we read in the Book of Deuteronomy 16:1 *“Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. (2) Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name there.*

*(3) Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life. (4) And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there anything of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.*

*(5) Thou mayest not sacrifice the Passover within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee: (6) But at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.*

*(7)* *And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents. (8)* *Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work therein. (9) Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn.”*

And here’s Leviticus 23:10 and the further instructions from the LORD on this feast.

Leviticus 23:10 *“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest: (11) And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.*

*(15) And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete: (16) Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days [one Pentecost]; and ye shall offer a new meat [meal] offering unto the Lord.*

*(17) Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the first fruits unto the Lord.”*

Now, think about this with me. The Jews were given a day when they were to commemorate the provision of the LORD upon them on the “morrow after the Sabbath” after the Passover Lamb was slain.

So, yes, the nation of Israel, began on that Sunday. Yes, the celebration of God’s provision began on that Sunday. But, what do we find in the LORD’s amazing program for this world?

He sent His Spirit to indwell every Believer on the very day that the Jews were celebrating God’s amazing and wonderful provision upon their fields.

Imagine being a Jew that Sunday and being at the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate Shavuot and there is nothing noteworthy at all about that Jewish celebration, is there? Unless, of course, you were a worshipper of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ. Because it was on that very same day that God chose to send His Promise, His Spirit upon His children.

That, folks, is the birthday of the Church of Jesus Christ.

And just why God did it this way, I can only surmise. Wouldn’t that event, in itself, have affected the Jews who at that time, continued in their unbelief?

God’s ways have always been a wonder to behold.

Now, why?

Why did the LORD set that Sunday as the day for the birthday of His Church? One reason. It was and continues to this day to be a reminder of the fact that He is your Provider. He’s your Provision. He chose to Himself indwell the very spirits of those who had chosen to be Christ-worshippers.

Folks, this day is not an insignificant day, is it? The LORD did for us, exactly what He promised. But He also did exactly what you needed done to you. You needed and continue to need every day of your life, the power of God’s Spirit to enable you to live in this world.

And Who is this Spirit? He is the Spirit of Christ Jesus Himself. Folks, the Spirit is your Greatest Provision. He’s the Spirit of God. And He’s the Spirit of Christ.

Romans 8:9 *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

You, Christian, are no longer in the flesh. Yes, you may be tempted through your sinful flesh. But you, as a new Creation in Christ, are not “in the flesh.” You are, “in the Spirit” because the Spirit in “in you.”

Jesus made this huge promise before His crucifixion. John 14:16 “*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; (17) Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”*

Andrew Murray, in his book, “The Spirit of Christ” writes this. *“When poured out at Pentecost, He came as the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, the Spirit of the Incarnate, crucified, and exalted Christ, the bearer and communicator to us, not of the life of God as such, but of that life as it had been interwoven into human nature in the person of Christ Jesus.”* [“The Spirit of Christ” by Andrew Murray chapter titled “the fifth day”].

Why has the Spirit come to indwell you, Christian? He’s come to so live through you that Christ is glorified in and through your life.

Be amazed. Be astounded. Be so glad with me today that the LORD sent His Spirit, not on any Sunday; but on that one specific Sunday when the Jews would be celebrating God’s wonderful provision.

Your Provision, folks, is a Person, the Third Person of the Trinity.

And how have you lived this week, in light of the One Who lives in you? Are you wholly submitted to Him? Is He leading and controlling your daily walk? If not, why not?

Or, are you one of those who are trying your best to live the Christian life on your own; under your own power. It’s foolishness.

You’ve got the Spirit of the living God indwelling your spirit.

And what is God calling you to today? He’s calling you to a live of obedient submission to Him. He’s sent His Spirit to live within your spirit so that you have the power to live and serve.

In conclusion, here’s a word from the Apostle Paul on this matter of how to live the Christian life. Galatians 2:20 *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Will you let Him live His life through you today and this week?

Now, if you are not a Christian, you do not have the Spirit of Christ within you. You are on your own.

But, fortunately, we have an answer.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Have you repented? Have you trusted in Jesus Christ alone for your eternal security? If not, today is the Day of salvation. Today is the day to believe on Him.

Here’s the sinner’s prayer.

* *“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”*

Now, let’ sing the hymn “Spirit of the Living God.” It’s found on page 389.