

SERMON – PENTECOST SUNDAY – MAY 31, 2020

Text: Acts 2:14; 17-21; 37-41

- I. The celebration of Pentecost Day is a vital reminder that the Holy Christian Church on earth is sustained, powered and comforted by the Holy Spirit
 - Perhaps even more significantly, Pentecost Day is a reminder that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God the Father, sent through Jesus Christ to you and to me. The Holy Spirit enables you and me to hear and believe the Gospel and to be transformed by it, progressively, through our whole life on earth and finally delivers us into eternal life.

- II. Let's begin our meditation on Pentecost, by briefly reviewing the history of the day.
 - Pentecost has its roots in the salvation history of God's Old Testament people, the Jews.
 - God rescued the Jews from slavery and certain genocide in Egypt. The tradition of Passover commemorates that great saving act of God for His people.
 - The newly freed people of God instituted the first Pentecost 50 days after Passover. That celebration commemorates the giving of the 10 commandments at Sinai. (The literal meaning of word, "Pentecost" is "50th day").
 - Significantly, about 1500 years later, God's only begotten son, Jesus Christ died His redeeming death on the cross at Passover time.
 - The first Christian Pentecost (described in our text from Acts) occurred 50 days after Jesus' resurrection.
 - This commemorates... not the Law of God... but the new gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

- Christ's cross and resurrection saves not just Jews, but everyone who believes in Him. It delivers us from sin, death and the power of the evil one and offers this salvation to the whole world in every generation.
- I said Christ's cross and resurrection, the heart of the Christian gospel, saves EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES this gospel.
- Now, it is the believing part that is the concern and primary ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- The apostle Peter in our text this morning preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. People heard in their own language and believed His message and were baptized and saved by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Christian church on earth of every age believes... you and I believe because of the mysterious activity of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds.
- Furthermore, believing is just the first step in the transformation of every Christian.
- The transformation of each Christian heart and mind is the building block of the Christian church on earth and inevitably results in the ever so subtle and gradual transform of the world.

- III. Irenaeus, one of the 2nd Century church fathers describes the importance of the Holy Spirit for every person when he wrote, "Know you that every man is either empty or full. For if he has not the Holy Spirit, he has no knowledge of the Creator, he has not received Jesus Christ the life, he knows not the Father who is in heaven."
- Let's put it in more contemporary and personal language. The Peter (Chin) in our congregation has had his heart and mind transformed in the same way and by the same Holy Spirit that transformed the Peter who preached in this Sunday's text from Acts. The same goes for Helen, Kathy, Astrid, Bill, Ken and every one of us in this congregation and every other congregation in every age.

-Dr. Martin Luther, the great reformation theologian expressed this so well. The reason Luther is such a great theologian is that he is a pastoral theologian. He is not concerned about intellectualizing the gospel or philosophically analyzing it.

-Luther had a rare pastoral insight into how the human heart and mind is transformed by God's Holy Spirit AND how the human heart and mind spiritually struggles.

-In one of Luther's Pentecost sermons, he writes, "It is not enough simply that Christ be preached; the Word must be believed. Therefore God sends the Holy Spirit to impress the preaching upon the heart – to make it inhere and live therein. Unquestionably, Christ accomplished all – took away our sins and overcame every obstacle, enabling us to become, through him, lords over all things. But the treasure lies in a heap; it is not everywhere distributed and applied. Before we can enjoy it, the Holy Spirit comes and communicates it to the heart, enabling us to believe and say, 'I too, am one who shall have the blessing.' To everyone who hears is grace offered through the Gospel; the grace he called, as Christ says (Matthew 11:28) 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,' etc."

-Luther then goes on to describe the spiritual struggle that goes on the every Christian heart. Every Christian believes that he or she is saved by Christ and is in the eternal kingdom of God by grace. Yet every Christian is aware of their sin. They know the sin is forgiven yet they hate the sin and their own sinful tendencies. So we must continually go through the cycle of confession, repentance and absolution. We continually gather around the Holy Communion table to be reassured of forgiveness through Christ's body and blood. There, as well as in gospel teaching and preaching, the Holy Spirit ministers to us. At Christ's table the company of the others who are also being transformed by the gospel also comforts us. The process of transformation is not completed until we heaven or Kingdom come.

IV. Luther's meaning to the third article of the Apostles' Creed summarizes the significance of the Holy Spirit's work that was dramatized at the first Christian Pentecost

-Luther says, "I believe I that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies, the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith"

-Galatians chapter 5 tells us that the fruits of the Holy Spirit's transforming work in Christian hearts and minds are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control.

-But that transformation of our hearts and minds all begins when the Holy Spirit enables us to realize that it is Jesus Himself addressing us in places like the Gospel hymns:

-"Softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling... calling for you and for me
See on the portals, He's watching and waiting... waiting for you and for me

Come home... come home... ye who are weary, come home

Earnestly, tenderly Jesus is calling, calling "O sinner, come home!"