

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
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Pentecost
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The Spirit worked in and through them

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the rushing of a violent wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw divided tongues that were like fire resting on each one of them. ⁴They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, since the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak fluently. ⁵Now there were godly Jewish men from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶When this sound was heard, a crowd came together and was confused, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷They were completely baffled and said to each other, “Look, are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them speaking in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, and of Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya around Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring in our own languages the wonderful works of God.” ¹²They were all amazed and perplexed. They kept saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others mocked them and said, “They are full of new wine.” ¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and spoke loudly and clearly to them: “Men of Judea, and all you residents of Jerusalem, understand this, and listen closely to my words. ¹⁵These men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶On the contrary, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷This is what God says will happen in the last days: I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹I will show wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and a rising cloud of smoke. ²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹And this will happen: Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. – Acts 2:1-21 EHV

Jesucristo es Señor y Salvador.

Ο Ιησούς Χριστός είναι Κύριος και Σωτήρας.

ישוע המשיח הוא האדון והמושיע.

Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.

Throughout my life, I have spent more time studying languages than I perhaps ever thought I would or desired. You may or may not be aware that language accusation is a high priority for our pastoral training system. We require the pastors in our church body to study the Biblical languages, of Greek and Hebrew. These are called the Biblical languages because the Old

Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. We encourage our pastors to learn another language, for me it was 9 years of formal instruction in Spanish. (I sure wish I were stronger in that one than I am.) We also encourage our pastors to learn the languages of the Lutheran Confessions. These are Latin and German.

Ask any pastor in one of our churches. He will tell you about the struggle of memorizing the vocables, learning the declensions, and conjugating verbs. Learning a language as an adult is tough work. Yet, it is important work. We want our pastors to be able to study God's Word in the original Greek and Hebrew. We want to be able to communicate the message of salvation to people of other tongues. We want to read what our fathers in the faith wrote in the generations that preceded us.

As a person who has spent so many hours learning languages, this Pentecost account astounds me. Language acquisition was challenging to me. The first time that I led a worship service in Spanish, I was so nervous about saying the right things that I almost distributed the wine before the host during Santa Cena. Although I struggled so immensely for years to learn languages, the Galileans were able to speak clearly to many in their native dialects instantly.

Why was this the case? **The Spirit worked in and through them.** On that day of Pentecost, Jesus' promise was fulfilled. The disciples were baptized with fire and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave them the power to proclaim in different tongues the mighty works of God. On this remembrance of Pentecost, I want us to think about the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

Although Pentecost is a day now in which we remember the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. In Old Testament times it was a festival in which there was a required pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Men were to appear before the Lord for several festivals. This was one of them. This was the festival of weeks. This took place 50 days after the Passover.

Following the timeline of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, which coincided with these Jewish festivals, we know that this is 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven. This was 50 days after Jesus' resurrection. Before Jesus' ascended into heaven, 10 days earlier, he made this promise to his disciples, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)

On this Pentecost, Jesus' promise was fulfilled. The disciples received power from the Holy Spirit. He made himself known in a spectacular sight. When they were all together, a sudden sound like a rushing, violent wind came from heaven. This sound filled the whole house. Then tongues like fire rested over each of their heads. Then, they were filled with the Holy Spirit who empowered them to speak in different languages. What did they say? We see this alluded to in the response of the people that were there who said, *"We hear them declaring in our own languages the works of God."* In various languages these disciples proclaimed the mighty deeds of the Lord.

Because it was the day of a pilgrimage festival, Jewish people and proselytes, Gentiles who were grafted into the Jewish life, from all over the world were there. There were people who spoke

many different languages. People from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, Crete and many other places. The amazing thing is that these people heard the disciples proclaiming what God had done in their own languages. This had happened because Jesus' promise was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit was sent in a spectacular way. **The Spirit worked in and through these disciples.**

Not everyone that was present on this day believed that this was the work of the Holy Spirit. Some even supposed that these men were just drunk. What a strange assertion for them to make though. In my experience, when you are around a person who has drank more than he should have, his language slurs. He doesn't begin to speak fluently and clearly in other languages.

In response to such assertions, Peter spoke up. Peter assured the people that these men were not drunk as they supposed, but instead this was done by the power of the Holy Spirit. **The Spirit worked in and through them.** This was a fulfillment of prophecy.

The prophecy that Peter pointed to was that which came from the prophet Joel. Peter tells us that Joel's prophecy was regarding the last days. There can be much conversation about when the last days are. Based on Peter's inspired speech here, we can say with confidence that the Last Days were from Jesus' ascension until his return. The disciples lived during the last days. 2,000 years later we do too.

According to Joel's prophecy, during the last days, God would pour out his Holy Spirit on all flesh. He said your sons and daughters would prophesy, young men will see visions, and old men would dream dreams. The Holy Spirit would be poured on people regardless of their class. **The Spirit would work in and through them.**

Now we might be wondering, if we are in the last days and the prophecy is that the Holy Spirit would work in and through people in such ways during these last days, is this something we should expect? To address that question we can explain how the prophets looked forward and saw fulfillments of the prophecies.

As the prophets, like Joel, looked forward to the future they saw a whole vision. For this one it was the last days. Yet, we know that this vision encompasses events from over thousands of years. Joel's vision saw the exile to Babylon and then the last days following Jesus' ascension up unto his return. Joel speaks about Judgment Day as the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Joel's vision wrapped up many events into one sight.

Therefore, we can see subsequent and partial fulfillments of Joel's vision. One of these was Pentecost. On that day, the Holy Spirit was poured out on people regardless of class. These were not professional prophets but the Galilean followers of Jesus. **The Spirit worked in and through them** as they spoke the message of God's mighty deeds to others.

Another fulfillment of this prophecy was the continued charismatic gifts during the apostolic age. During the time of the apostles who were sent forward by Jesus to proclaim his message of salvation, he gave special gifts of the Spirit to these people that at times accompanied their message. Why did he do this? He did this to demonstrate the authority of their message. They didn't have Bibles to carry with them, instead they could show the authority of their message

through the charismatic gifts of the Spirit which could include miracles, visions, and speaking in tongues.

The next fulfillment of this prophecy is through the greater revelation that is given to us today who have the fulfillment of God's promise brought to us through his powerful Word. Dreaming dreams and seeing visions were tied to the proclamation of the Word. Now, we have direct access to the whole vision of God's plan in the Holy Scriptures. In a sense, now all who proclaim the words of Jesus can prophesy. As they do this, **the Spirit works in and through them.**

The culmination of this prophecy will be seen on Judgement Day. Joel shared all the signs of the Last Day. These signs can be seen and have been seen in the sky above and on the earth below. On the Last Day, all flesh will see the greatest vision of Jesus Christ descending from where he ascended. On that day, every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord. All believers, whether male or female, slave or free, will receive the wonderful vision of seeing Jesus face-to-face in heaven.

As Peter noted in his message, Joel's prophecy is fulfilled. This however does not mean we need to expect the charismatic gifts, like that of speaking in tongues, be given to us. In one sense, the Apostle Paul warns against a seeking after such charismatic gifts. Paul wrote, *"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."* (1 Corinthians 13:1) He also wrote about the use of the gift of tongues, *"Brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what good will I do you, unless I communicate to you a revelation, or some knowledge, or a prophecy, or some teaching?"* (1 Corinthians 14:6) Paul emphasized a word that reveals revelation of God's truth over that of the spiritual gift of tongues. Revelation from the Holy Spirit is a greater gift.

On the day of Pentecost, **the Holy Spirit worked in and through these disciples** with the gift of tongues to reveal the mighty works of God. In our day, the Holy Spirit still brings the words of the Apostles to us, the words of Jesus to us. He does this through the Bible. The Holy Scriptures are a clear word of testimony about what God has done.

Does it seem that such charismatic gifts have ceased? Your pastors do not come before you speaking in the tongue of angels. Our church elders do not share with us dreams to be interpreted. Yet, **the Holy Spirit still works in and through us.** He does so powerfully. He does so through the word of Christ.

The Holy Spirit works in and through us using the gospel. This is as it is written in Romans, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."* (Romans 1:16) Later in Romans, it is also written, *"So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through the word of Christ."* (Romans 10:17) Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit is powerfully at work among us today.

The gospel is the good news of salvation that comes from our God. The message that God the Father sent his only-begotten Son to live, die, and rise for us. This is the message that in Christ Jesus all our sins are washed away. The Holy Spirit uses this message today. **The Spirit works in and through us.**

The gospel comes to use in intangible and tangible form. The intangible form is the Word. Through reading and proclamation the Holy Spirit works in and through us. He creates and strengthens faith in Jesus. This faith receives the grace that God gives. The Spirit also uses the tangible gospel. These are the sacraments. He uses water together with the Word and bread and wine with Jesus' body and blood to deliver such grace. Today, **the Spirit works in and through us.**

On this Pentecost, let us give thanks that the Holy Spirit is active amongst us just as Jesus promised and Joel prophesied. The Holy Spirit works through the revealed word about Jesus our Savior. He also works through the other means of grace, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through these means, he prepares us to see the vision of Jesus face-to-face on the Last Day. Amen.