

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost Sunday  
May 23, 2021 (Confirmation Sunday)  
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl  
***God has poured his Spirit upon you***

—Acts 2:1-21

It's a beautiful day today. The forecast is calling for 8 mile per hour winds. That's a nice, light breeze. Perfect weather if you're planning a picnic outdoors. Current conditions *inside* this building, however, are not nearly as calm. There has been a wind blowing at hurricane strength since we started the service twenty minutes ago. This wind is not caused by atmospheric conditions so it hasn't messed up your hair. Nevertheless this wind has tremendous power as it comes from heaven itself. Of course, I'm talking about the Holy Spirit. On this Pentecost Sunday I want to assure you that the breath of God, the wind of heaven, the Holy Spirit himself is still aggressively at work today as he was in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones 2,600 years ago and as he was on the Day of Pentecost 2,000 years ago. *God has poured his Spirit upon you to convert you and to give you courage.*

In Acts chapter 2, we see the Holy Spirit being poured out into the lives of the disciples and those around them just as Jesus had promised. It was the day of Pentecost, a big religious festival, where Jewish people came from all over the world to Jerusalem to celebrate the harvest and give thanks to God. On that day, the disciples of Jesus were together, and that's when God the Holy Spirit decided to perform some amazing miracles.

He came with a loud sound, the blowing of a violent wind. But it wasn't just the sound of wind that caught their attention. Something that looked like tongues of fire landed on the disciples' heads. The apostles began speaking in the languages of the people. They never studied those languages, but they could speak them with such precision.

Oh, we may wish that little flames would also dance on top of our heads during this service. Wouldn't that be an awesome visible display of the Holy Spirit's presence? Wouldn't it be awesome to see little flames above the eight confirmands this morning? Wouldn't a miracle like that really prove to this congregation that their faith in Jesus is alive and well? Wouldn't it be great if we could speak in languages as an outward display of the Holy Spirit's presence? Some churches insist that those things are necessary. But look at the Day of Pentecost closely. What effect did the sound of the rushing wind and the tongues of fire have on the crowds that gathered? How did the people react to the different languages being spoken? *"Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?'"* (Acts 2:12). Those audible and visible displays of the Holy Spirit's presence did not bring clarity, comfort, or courage to the people. They brought confusion.

In fact, it wasn't until Peter started preaching to them that the Holy Spirit entered their hearts so they could make sense of everything. It was the Holy Spirit working through the Word that brought over 3,000 people to be baptized. *God has poured his Spirit upon you through his Word.*

Do you realize that you have power at your fingertips in the Word of God? It doesn't look like much, and sadly, many people who have gone through confirmation don't think of it as much. It happens in our own church. In our own church body, four out of every ten confirmands stop attending church two years after they have been confirmed. I just heard a stat not too long ago that the most dangerous time to be a Christian is at the age of 16, give or take a year. Some people say that more people fall away from the Christian faith during those years than any other time. Does this mean that they have given up on Jesus and stopped believing in him? Not necessarily. But what they forget is that if they are not regularly being filled with the Holy Spirit, then they are in danger of becoming like an empty Styrofoam cup that helplessly swirls around a trash can, tossed this way and that by the wind.

That's why we need the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon us. I need the Holy Spirit strengthening my faith through his Word, and so do you. *God has poured his Spirit upon you through his Word.* Just think of all the miracles God the Holy Spirit has performed just this morning. Every single person sitting here this morning is a miracle of God the Holy Spirit. It's a miracle that you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who took away your sins. It's a miracle that you have rearranged your priorities in such a way today that you are sitting here instead of sleeping in at home. It's a miracle that we have eight confirmands who are ready to give their promises that they would face death rather than turn away from their Savior. The fact that our confirmands can give these promises is evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, *"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 12:3). *God has poured his Spirit upon you to convert you.*

But what does that mean for your daily lives? We are children of God. What does that mean as we live in the world? Well, one thing it means is that you now have *courage* to live each and every day for Jesus. *God has poured his Spirit upon you to give you courage.*

I don't think it's a surprise to you that the world is becoming more and more ungodly. Every day I am praying for my children and the youth of our congregations. I pray that God will give them courage and strength to stand firmly on the truth of God's Word.

I just think about my own life. Maybe you think about yours. How many times have we been tempted to shrink back and stop living and sharing our Christian faith? As our culture becomes more and more secular, redefining marriage, promoting abortion, teaching evolution and atheism, aren't you tempted to shrink back, "I don't want people to know that I'm a Christian. What if they harass me? What if they make fun of me? And what if they ask me what I believe, and I tell them, and they ridicule me? Maybe I should hide my faith." Have you ever been intimidated by the world, afraid of openly living and sharing your faith?

The apostle Peter was like that in his life. Just fifty-two days earlier, Peter publicly denied knowing Jesus. In fact, he called down curses upon himself, "I do not know the man." He denied knowing Jesus three times. But here's what's amazing about situations like that. Jesus forgave Peter. As Peter called down curses upon himself, Jesus with lavished grace, poured his Spirit upon Peter. And on the Day of Pentecost, Peter courageously stood before the crowd and shared the message of Jesus with them. And just look at the power of those words. Over 3,000 people were baptized. Over 3,000 people came to faith in Jesus. God the Holy Spirit gave courage to Peter. He shared the truth of his Savior, and God blessed his message.

Can I share with you a personal story? I don't normally share personal stories in my sermons, but I think this one will help underscore this truth from God's Word. The Wednesday morning Bible study group heard me share the following story last week, so I'm sorry if you have already heard this.

I was in my first year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, studying to be a pastor. I worked at a factory as my part-time job. There was a fellow worker whose name was Alex. When Alex found out that I was studying to be a pastor, he looked for every opportunity to poke fun at me. I thought that this would be a great opportunity to share the message of Jesus with Alex. But it turned out that Alex loved making me into his verbal punching bag. And do you know what I did? I stopped sharing the message of Jesus with Alex. Oh, I was still nice to him and friendly to him, but at the time I was worn out from the verbal abuse that I stopped looking for an opportunity to share Jesus. Finally, it was the last week that I was working at my job. I had another job lined up for the summer months, so I was leaving the factory job. My coworkers had a little "farewell" party for me after our shift. And guess who showed up. Yup. Alex. And as he walked over to me, I could tell he had something to say. In my mind, I thought, "Oh great. Here we go again." But he came to me and said, "Gary, can I meet with you for lunch some time?" I wasn't super excited about that idea, but I agreed. A few days later we met for lunch. And to my surprise, Alex said, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry that I was such a jerk to you." He continued, "But I am curious why you were always so kind and friendly to me even when I made fun of you." And do you know what I did? I shared the fact that Jesus is my life. I told him about my Savior who came to this world, who died a brutal death, who became sin for me, and who rose from the dead guaranteeing that my sins were forgiven. I told Alex that Jesus forgave all my foolish sins and Jesus forgives his and so do I.

I don't know what happened to Alex. I never saw him again after that. But I know that the breath of God, the wind of heaven, the Holy Spirit was at work that day. And it has been my prayer ever since that the Holy Spirit continued to do his work in Alex' life. It is my prayer that someday I will see Alex again in heaven. My friends, *God has poured his Spirit upon you*. You know Jesus. You believe that he is your life. God the Holy Spirit has converted you. And he is the one who gives you courage. When you open your mouth in this way, you're not just letting loose a wisp of information; you'll be unleashing the breath of God - an eternally life-changing force in the person of God the Holy Spirit. *God has and will continue to pour his Spirit upon you*. Amen.