

## Poured Out

John 20:19-31

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Acts 2:1-18

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they

asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?"

8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

My son, Isaac, and I were the first ones up on Saturday morning, and as we were in the kitchen getting breakfast, Isaac was looking at the calendar that hangs on our kitchen wall.

Our calendar is a very colorful, fun, kid-friendly one, with cartoon drawings marking major holidays. We love that it comes with stickers that we can use to highlight days special to our family; birthdays, days off from school.

After spending a few moments looking intently at the month of May, Isaac said this. "Daddy", he asked, "How come our calendar doesn't have Pentecost on it?" The preacher in me swelled with pride.

Well, I said, that's because Pentecost is a holiday that's just for the church. You know how everybody celebrates holidays like Christmas and Easter? How on those days everybody takes days off, how people get presents, or have big dinners? Well, Pentecost is different.

Pentecost is a day just for Christians, a special day for us to celebrate the church.

Isaac seemed content with that. And as far as I know, what I said is true. Outside of the church, Pentecost doesn't count for much. It doesn't come with cards, or presents, or as a good excuse take time off from work.

I would warn you though, and I won't be held responsible for the consequences; don't try using Pentecost as an excuse for not having anything special for mom.

Even the Bible doesn't have much to say about the remarkable events of Pentecost. Luke, the Gospel writer and the author of Acts, is the only New Testament writer who makes a record of this occasion.

While Paul talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and John mentions how Jesus breathes the Spirit on his disciples after his resurrection from the dead, only Luke “emphasizes the presence of the Spirit of God to the apostles through visible and audible signs,...through the speaking of Peter and his colleagues “in other tongues” who are understood by all the members of the diverse, [international] assembly of Jews in Jerusalem.”<sup>1</sup>

What Luke doesn't do, however, is give Pentecost its name. That had been done long, long before.

I can ask any of our students who've had geometry what a five-sided polygon is called – a pentagon. The first part of that word “pente,” is the same Greek word that's in Pentecost, which means fiftieth. In this case, Pentecost refers to the “fiftieth” day following on the Jewish celebration of Passover.

The reason, as Luke says, that there were so many Jews there in Jerusalem, Jews gathering from all over the world, is because they were there to celebrate a religious holiday called the “Feast of Weeks.” “Originally, this was a farmer's feast. According to Deut. 16:9, one was to “count seven weeks from the time one first put the sickle to the standing grain.”...On this day, then, Jews celebrated the gifts of the grain harvest, thanking God for the blessings so received.”<sup>2</sup> Their celebration of Pentecost included making an offering of grain at the temple, which explains why so many out of towners were there in Jerusalem.

Along other Old Testament references, there are records from Jewish scrolls and texts surviving from Luke's day that show that the Jews may have celebrated several

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1 Fitzmyer, J. The Anchor Bible commentary. The Acts of the Apostles. pg. 232.

2 Ibid. pg. 233.

different Pentecosts there in Jerusalem, each one following the other after a period of 7 weeks, and each one held to thank God for a particular produce of the land – a Pentecost not just for new grain from the field, but for new oil from the olive crop, even a celebration of the new wine from the vineyard.

Commentator Joseph Fitzmyer suggests that this evidence of multiple Jewish Pentecosts, especially the one for new wine, explains why the disciples are mocked like they are in verse 2:13, why some in the crowd might have shouted, “They've had too much wine!” in explanation of the disciple's strange speech.<sup>3</sup>

Watching Peter and the disciples under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the skeptics in the crowd accused them of having popped the cork on their wine offerings too early, and too eagerly.

But regardless of the exact circumstances, Pentecost records for us the first miracle found in the book of Acts. For on this celebration day, for the first time, the Twelve apostles were endowed with the Holy Spirit of God. Just as the Spirit had descended upon Jesus, at his baptism, in the form of a dove, signaling the start of his public ministry and teaching, so too the flame and the breath of the Spirit touches the apostles, and from that day forward, all that they will do and say is Spirit guided, Spirit inspired.

It is at this moment, this Pentecost day, that the church is born. When the Spirit arrives, the company of Jesus' followers and believers, the disciples and the apostles turn - from an inward, hiding, “all together in one room with the doors locked and the shades down” kind of people, into the outward facing, out of doors, body of Christ in the world. In the Spirit, they become men and women called and empowered to witness to Jesus; first to their neighbors, and eventually to the entire world.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pg. 235.

Therein lies the ongoing meaning of Pentecost, the reason that we continue to celebrate and recognize it today. Just as it was for those first apostles, the Holy Spirit of God remains the source of life and growth for us, for the church, today.

The gift of tongues enabled the apostles to speak, enabled people from other nations to hear, of the Good News of God's saving grace and love given in Jesus Christ. So too, the Spirit today enables us to testify, to witness to Jesus Christ, to the love of God, to the hope, the peace, and the life available to all people.

But there's a problem with that, isn't there? If I claim that the same Spirit who touched the disciples there in Jerusalem is here today, with us, with the same amazing power and miraculous commission to speak – well, then where are the tongues of fire, where is that violent wind?

Granted, some of us here, particularly some of the men, may appear a little singed on top. Indeed, some look like they've been burned right down to their roots!

Flame or no flame, like those first apostles, we too are called to step out, into the daylight of the world, to testify to Jesus Christ. And just like those first apostles, we are perfectly equipped and empowered to do so.

Let's not get lost looking for any visible sign in order to prove the presence of God's invisible Spirit. The proof is not anything coming down over you, but rather in what God can pour out of you. And what God does, and can do, through you, is miraculous indeed.

Through the Holy Spirit of God, we in this church already know a myriad of languages, a multitude of vocabularies, through which we can witness to Christ our Lord. Look

around at who is here today, consider what a great number of neighborhoods, families, businesses, schools, corners of the world near and far, that we have contact with everyday.

For those of you who do, think about where you work. As a Christian in your office, in your business, the Spirit has called you to work with integrity, with honesty, with honor. That speaks of Jesus to your coworkers, and to your customers. When they see you play by the rules, treat others with respect, not just doing your job, but taking on your work as your way to serve God and others, they will see something new, something different, something touched with divine favor.

Students, let the Spirit guide you through the halls of your school demonstrating that what's important is not looks, or popularity, not having latest and coolest stuff. Instead show that what matters is showing mercy, reaching out to the outcast, using your specific gifts and abilities, be they academic or athletic, not to lift yourself above everyone else, but because you just want to put a smile on God's face, use them to bring joy to others. Let the Spirit use you to show your peers that indeed, there are things in this world that are true, meaningful, there are ways to make a difference for the better in this world.

Maybe you have a family member, a friend, maybe even a spouse, who is young in faith, not so sure what to think about Jesus. Know that the Spirit wills you to speak to them words of love and encouragement, to serve without condition or criteria, to forgive with no strings attached. Love them as God has loved you. Call them by name, offering to them the same care and attention that God offers you. See if they don't hear and see God's love present for them in a new, a powerful, a transformative way.

Christ died and rose for you, Christ brings the power of God's Holy Spirit to you, into your life, that you might tell others that this same good news is true for them as well.

For each of us, depending on where God leads us, the words may be different, but the result will be the same. As we testify to God's goodness and mercy, God's power and healing, in Jesus Christ, as Christ's body in the world – his hands and feet, his heart and ear, his compassion and care, the Spirit's flame burns bright within you.

Glory be to God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.