

Casey Wilkerson.

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Pentecost

Acts 2:37-47

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Good morning church! And happy birthday. Is it anyone's birthday today? Even if it's not, today we celebrate the birth of the Christian church. When God sent His Holy Spirit to the disciples, and lives were changed and the church started and grew. The day of Pentecost. Originally, Pentecost was a Jewish holiday held 50 days after Passover. Pentecost is the Greek word for 50. It was one of three major feasts during the Jewish year. It celebrated Thanksgiving for harvested crops. However, Pentecost for Christians means something far different. Modern Christians observe Pentecost as a holiday, not to celebrate a wheat harvest, but to remember when the Holy Spirit invaded the Church, filled the Church with power and added 3,000 new believers.

We read about Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Will you stand with me, in honor of God's Word, as we read together from Acts 2 about what happened to the disciples on that day of Pentecost.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:1-4)

Prayer

You may be seated. Thank you for standing with me. We will continue to read through Acts 2; I won't make you stand all morning though. The disciples were all in one place, waiting for the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised them. If you back up to Acts 1:4-8. You'll see why they waited:

“While he (Jesus) was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.” (Acts 1:4-8)

Are any of you good at waiting for something? The church is blessing me with a sabbatical this summer. Pastors in our church get a sabbatical after seven years in ministry here at this church. Well this summer will be nine years at WVC. Three years ago we began planning what we would do with some time off, and a road trip was one of them. Well two years ago I went to Peru to do a wedding (in Spanish, nunca) and so Pastor Mike let me postpone the sabbatical for a year later. Well last year was, well you know what last year was. I remember telling Pastor Mike, I'm quarantined at home with six kids and this is not rest at all, please don't make this be my sabbatical. So anyways, this summer it's finally happening. And I am not very good at waiting. The disciples may have not been too good at waiting either, but at least they were obedient. They were commissioned to go all over the world, but first they had to wait. Jesus told them to wait, and they did. The disciples would have been excited for ministry to begin, Jesus had told them to "Go and make disciples" but first they needed to wait for the Holy Spirit. Making disciples, growing the church, none of that was going to happen without the Holy Spirit. So they waited. Until on the day of Pentecost, the wait was over. There was a rush of wind, and the tongues of fire. Wind and fire all represent God's divine presence in the Old Testament...whether it was the wind on Mount Sinai, Moses and the burning bush, or the pillar of fire leading the Israelites at night through the wilderness. As the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak different languages many others were amazed and confused with how they were doing this. So they asked the question, "What does this mean?" So Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit, seizes an opportunity to preach about repentance, Jesus, and a message that thousands of people needed to hear.

Let's remember that Peter was the one who Jesus said would build the church. But let's not forget that Peter wasn't perfect. Peter was the one who was embarrassed to be connected to Jesus back when Jesus was arrested. He denied knowing Jesus three times, and this was after Jesus said, he would do it. He wasn't perfect, but he has such a great story...years ago he encounters Jesus - Jesus takes him on a 3-year journey and shows him miracle after miracle - Peter even walks on water himself - later on he makes a bad choice at a critical time and denies even knowing Jesus by his words and actions - Jesus dies on the cross and is resurrected - visiting his followers, Peter sits with his guilt. The time finally comes where he is restored - where Jesus himself confronts Peter and asks him three times if he loves Jesus. Peter says, yes, of course, and Jesus tells him to feed His sheep. The sheep are the people, the followers of Jesus, the church. So Jesus tells him to take care of the sheep, and after waiting for the Holy Spirit, now he will. He receives the Holy Spirit and gets up and shares a life changing message to everyone there - the sheep.

He starts by using some Scripture from the Old Testament, don't want to blow their minds too soon, he's got to ease in. Give the crowd something they're more used to at first. They've heard it before. So he shares some words from the prophet Joel...

"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. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18)

Peter is using some of the Old Testament to familiarize and explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which has just been witnessed. And that God's spirit, is not just for the Jews, but for everyone! He finished his quote from Joel by saying in verse 21...

“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Acts 2:21)

Everyone will be saved. The name of the Lord IS Jesus. So Peter continues his sermon to explain Jesus as Lord. He performed miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among all of them through Jesus. God used Peter to convict the listeners with these words...

“This man (Jesus) was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,[d] put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” (Acts 2:23-24)

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, and if everyone can be saved, that means He died for everyone. He died for everyone, because it's all our fault. We can't read this without putting ourselves into the story. WE put Him to death, WE nailed him to the cross. You might not even have been born, but our sin put him on the cross. God knew our sin would keep us from Him; this was His plan to save us. Jesus loved us and knew the plan, so he died for us. He's not going to let death beat Him though. God raised Him from the dead. That's Jesus. That is the name of the one who saves.

This might not be new news to you today, but it was new for thousands of people that day on Pentecost. New or not, it is Good News.

Peter continues his message to connect Jesus with an Old Testament King and prophet, one whom the crowd would have been very familiar with, who was also related to Jesus, King David. David had long been dead and buried. But he knew the Messiah, the Savior, would come. Peter said this about David...

“Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.” (Acts 2:31-33)

Peter speaks about Joel and David in order to connect Jesus to the prophecies about him said hundreds of years before this time. He closed his sermon in verse 36...

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” (Acts 2:36)

After a great sermon from Peter, the crowd needs to know what to do about it? So they ask the question, "What should we do?" You should ask that question anytime you hear a sermon. Or anytime you read your Bible.

A good sermon should challenge you to do something, and they were challenged. Peter gave them all this information, good information. But it's not good enough if the information doesn't lead to transformation. Peter calls them to repent and be baptized. He doesn't call them to say their sorry. There is a difference between repentance and saying sorry. Repentance involves a heart change, and a change of action. Saying sorry, when you mean it, is admitting you were wrong. If you don't mean it, then it's just words. Like when kids apologize because their parents told them to. I'm sorry I got caught. As a kid, saying sorry was sometimes all the punishment I needed. One time I broke one of my grandpas windows without him seeing it, on purpose. Well my mom saw it. So she made me call grandpa to apologize. I was crying before I even had the phone in my hand. I not only apologized, but I also had a change of heart and action. That was repenting. I never broke his windows again. Peter knew about repentance; you think he ever denied knowing Jesus again? Nope. He had a change of heart and action. Repentance means having a change of both. So Peter answers their question, "What shall we do?" Starting in verse 38 Peter replied...

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39)

Peter said to repent: With repentance comes God's forgiveness for our past. You may still have consequences for your past, but God does forgive. You break the law, God will forgive you, but you'll still go to jail. You hurt a friend's feelings and damage your relationship with them, God will forgive you, you'll still have work to do in repairing the relationship with your friend though. When I was in high school, I was a nice guy for the most part. We would all eat at lunch together and one of our friends was there and he was annoying me. There wasn't room for all of our chairs some days, so sometimes people would sit right behind you. Still kind of hear what's going on. Well my friend was right behind me and someone would say something and he would lean in and say, "What did he say?" We'd all laugh at a joke and he'd tap me on the shoulder and say, "What's so funny?" Well after doing that a couple of times, I had enough and I turned around and told him, "Nobody likes you. Go away." I still can't believe I said that. So he left. We have all said something we regretted. Peter did, I did, I'm sure you all have too. Later that day I found him and apologized. It wasn't just words, I was repentant. We hugged and made up and went back to class. A couple years later when I was in college, I found out he had committed suicide. I can't help him; I can't encourage him. I still have to live with what I said and how I treated him, but with repentance comes God's forgiveness for our past. God's forgiveness can free us from a painful past when we repent.

Peter said to be baptized. If you have repented and decided to follow Jesus, then you need to get baptized. Choosing to follow Jesus is a personal choice. Nobody can make you follow Jesus. They can make you say sorry, or maybe make you go to church. But they can't make

you listen or have a change of heart and action. But when you choose to repent and follow Jesus, getting baptized is how you share with your church family what God has done for you on the inside. The early church was told to repent, and be baptized. Repentance and baptism are supposed to go hand in hand. If you haven't been baptized, you can fill out a Connect Card before you leave and we will let you know when the next service is for getting baptized.

Peter said to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Repentance brings forgiveness for our past, and it brings God's Holy Spirit to give us power to change our future. God's Holy Spirit brings power, peace, wisdom. And it is a GIFT. God's gift to "every one of you." Verse 39 says...

"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:39)

God's gift of the Holy Spirit is a promise. A promise for the youngest and oldest, it's a promise for you here and people who are far away. You might be sitting there and thinking you have left God and now you are too far away from Him. The promise is for "All who are far off". You can't get too far from God. You can't get too far from the Holy Spirit, and you can't get too far from the peace, and power and wisdom that God wants to pour into your life through the Holy Spirit. So what are we waiting for? As we pray, what better time and place to ask God for a fresh start than on Pentecost. A day we celebrate the start of the early church and 3000 lives changed and committed to Jesus.

You can pray sitting or kneeling in your seat, or up here at the altar, somewhere you can focus on you and God. We've heard about repentance today, if you need that and you are wanting to turn and change your heart and actions, you can have that conversation with God now. If you are tired and need a fresh outpouring of God's Holy Spirit (His gift to you) in your life, you can have the conversation with God now. Don't wait.

Let's sing.

Prayer.

Closing: Jesus told the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit. We don't have to wait. We can ask and receive the Holy Spirit now. It's God's gift to us, but it's not the kind we hog to ourselves.

"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:39)

You probably know someone who needs to know about God's gift. They need to know about what you heard today. So what are we waiting for?