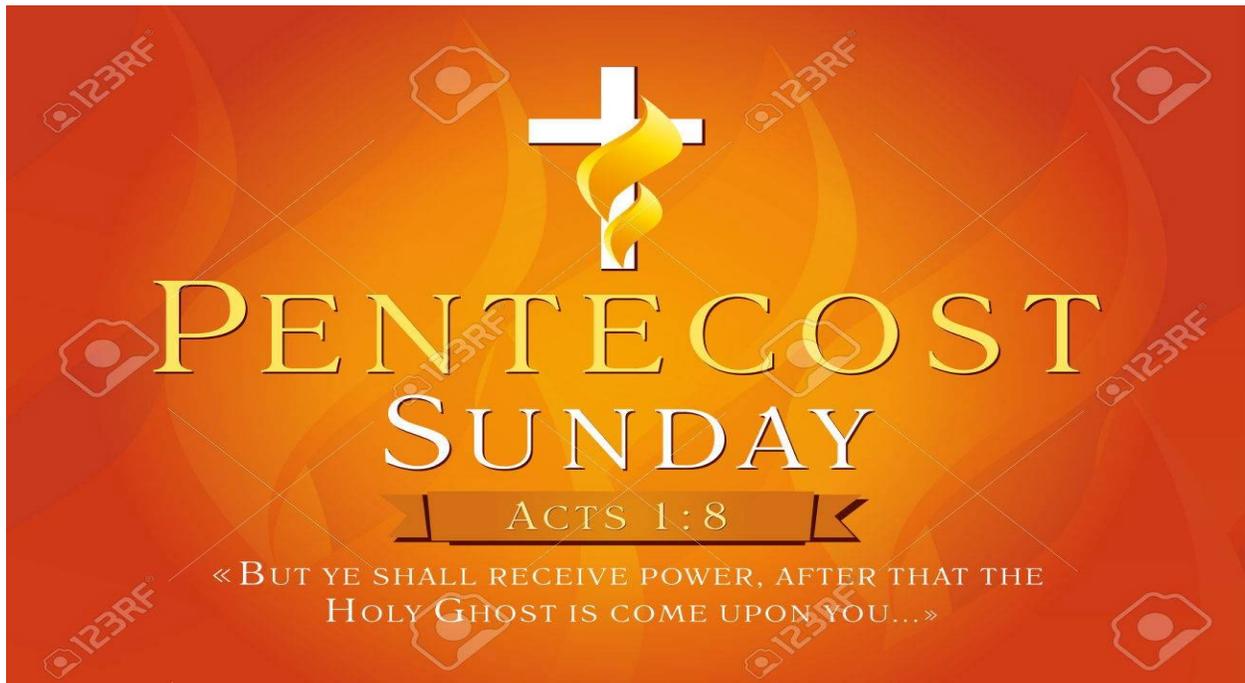


MAY 31, 2020

DAY OF PENTECOST

YEAR A

**Numbers 11:24-30; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or
Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 or John 7: 37-39**



OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, like a rushing wind your spirit moved upon the first disciples on the day of Pentecost, and like a purifying fire your spirit seared their hearts and minds with the message of salvation. Send your Spirit upon your church in this time and place, stir up our courage, and rouse us for prophetic witness, that we may join with them to proclaim to the world your mighty deeds of power in Jesus Christ. And let all God's people say Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION

God has promised that everyone who calls on the name of the lord shall be saved. Therefore, let us call upon the lord, confessing our sins.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of new creation, we confess that we have failed to trust your bountiful goodness. By the power of the holy spirit you brought forth the earth and its creatures in abundance. yet, we hoard earth's resources and refuse to share your gifts. We dishonor your generosity by withholding our charity to those in need.

We betray your kindness by dealing harshly with our enemies. We disregard your compassion by severely judging the sins of others. forgive us. By the power of your spirit renew our hearts and free us from sins that we may enjoy the fullness of your blessing upon all creation. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Sisters and brothers, God offers forgiveness of our sins and the grace of repentance. Accept God's grace, repent of your sin, and be restored to abundant life. Thanks be to God!

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Almighty God, by the power of your holy spirit, speak to us in the language of our hearts, that we may hear your Word with understanding and answer your call with confidence. Amen.

Scripture Readings

EPISTLE LESSON

Acts 2:1-21

2When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

14But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. 21Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Holy Spirit Comes

The feast of Pentecost, or Weeks, as it is known in the Old Testament, marked the end of the celebration of the spring harvest that began at Passover during which devout Israelites families praised God for God's grace and bounty. It was also the beginning of a period, lasting until the autumn Festival of Booths or Tabernacles, where the first fruits of the field were to be sacrificed to God. The Feast of Weeks was a time of covenant renewal.

Pentecost is both an end and a beginning, leaving behind of that which is past, the launching forth into what which is only now beginning to be. Pentecost therefore is not a time of completion. It is moving forward into new dimensions of being, whose basic forms are clear, but whose fulfillment has yet to be realized. Twice, in connection with Jesus' ascension, the coming of the Spirit has been promised: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you". That promise is now realized in a manner far surpassing the expectations of even the most faithful disciples. New life for the church! New life for individuals within the church! New life through the Spirit of God! That is the meaning of Pentecost.

The last couple of years I watched a series "A.D. The Bible Continues". The series starts with Jesus leaving the tomb and continues with the disciples doing Jesus' work. The part of the series that I liked the best was the scene of Pentecost. The house was filled with people, the Holy Spirit came with a sound of a violent wind. the spirit comes suddenly as flames surrounded the whole house. Moving inside the flames surrounded the people, fire settled on each one of them, never burning anything or person. The crowd that gathered were bewildered because of the people speaking in their own native language, but the people heard them in their own native

language. Some thought they were drunk, ‘but Peter standing with the eleven raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. (V14) Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. (V15)

Of course, they were not drunk, the Spirit of God that had been put upon them. I only wish that when I pray for Holy Spirit to help that I was given the sign that they had been given. To be able to know for sure that the Holy Spirit was with me would give me security. Since when the pandemic started, I have been struggling to write my sermons. It’s be difficult to find the right words, I have the idea of the sermon, but it seems when I go to write, my concentration seems to be off. My friend Helen tells me I have to much on my mind because of the Covid-19 and me worrying about the church and congregation. This is true, I do worry about our church and all of you, about my family and everything affect by this pandemic. I am anxious to get back behind the pulpit and ook out at all of you, but I also want to make sure that we can do this safely. God has given me a very special gift, and I am very lucky that this gift has brought me to you.

Perhaps, the gift of tongues at Pentecost is not poured out for the disciples’ own sakes. It is not given so that they might say, “Look at us! We learned a foreign language without going to class!” The purpose of the gift is not to brag about their cutting-edge ministry nor to praise their growing church, but rather to praise God.

There are no bonus points for being a recipient of the Spirit’s movement. As Peter’s speech makes clear (Acts 2:14-21), the purpose of the gift is so that its recipients might speak out about what God has done.

The disciples do not manufacture this power, they receive it from God. The ability to speak the Gospel in words that others will understand does not rest on a new marketing plan for potential members. It rests on the power of God and the believers' openness to be moved to proclaim what God has done through the centuries and is doing now in the lives of God's people.

Today, Pentecost Sunday is both an end and a beginning, the leaving behind of that which is past, the launching forth into that which is only beginning to be. Pentecost is not a time of completion. It is moving forward into new dimensions of being, whose basic forms are clear, but whose fulfillment has yet to be realized. No one is excluded from this display of God's grace. Unlike other important moments in the history of God's mighty acts of salvation – transformation where only the inner few are witnesses to the work of God's Spirit, everyone is included at Pentecost. Yet not everyone responded to the winds and fires of new life, at least not in the positive ways. Some mocked and in their unwillingness to believe the freshness of God's initiatives, reacted with stale words as they confused Spirit induced joy with alcohol induced inebriation. Perhaps it was the very extravagant expression of the Spirit's presence that drove them to conclude: "This cannot be what it seems to be!"

Yet what it seemed to be is precisely what it was. God's Spirit unleashed! New life – sudden, unmerited, irresistible, new Life!

God has given each one of us a gift or talent that we can use and do use to help others. Whatever your gift is, your purpose of that gift is to work for God, to help all his children, and make this world a better place to live. So, I ask, what is your gift or talent that God

has given you? How are you using this gift to help others or bring peace to the world? Take time today and ponder these questions. ‘

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

A reflection on Acts 2:1-21 by Peter Lockhart

When And Then

For each when there is a then...

The word 'when' seems so innocent and innocuous but it is the precursor to marvellous, magical, mischievous, malign, morose and mournful events.

In the passage:

When the day of Pentecost had come...

When they heard the sound, they came on the run...

What 'when' is in my life and in yours?

When will I be more attentive to God?

When will I experience God inside the room not outside?

When will I love more deeply?

When will I die?

When will I rise again?

When will I arrive?

When will I be more disciplined with my time?

When will I give more of myself to my wife and children?

When will I respond to those who suffer in a personal and committed way?

But 'when' is not just about me and my 'when' but about all people - those inside the room, those who ran to the room, and even those who do not run and see - the ambivalent and absent ones.

When will others know God as a God of love, peace and mercy?

When will God's presence in other religions be revealed and understood?

When will the Nigerian girls go home?

When will asylum seekers be released?

When will they be welcomed?

When will suffering end for those who are ill?

When will the pain stop for those who mourn?

When will the song of the birds and wonder of creation remind us of God's goodness?

When will communities learn to live openly as well as exclusively in their uniqueness with translucent, transparent, transforming walls which build other communities as well as value their diversity?

When will the hungry be fed?

When will the leaders of nations have greater wisdom?

Yet within the passage for each when there is a then...

'Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through the ranks...'

'Then... they were thunderstruck...'

The 'then' does not always 'solve' the 'when' but it gives us hope that 'then' something will be different, it encourages us that something else is coming. Or, maybe more accurately that someone else is coming.

God will act! Even though, as Jesus says, no one knows the time, the time is still coming. This is our reassurance and hope that 'when' is not ignored and there will be a 'then', a time when the kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven.

When? Then!

Send time each day reading this reflection by Peter Lockhart. Answer the questions each day and see if your answers change as each day changes.

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

For the church throughout the world, may your mercy and grace be upon us as we worship separately in our homes. Almighty God hear our prayer.

Inspire the sons and daughters of your church for prophetic witness to your truth, and upon old and young give clarity of vision to acknowledge your saving power in the world.

For nations of the world and its leaders, for our President; Governors of all our states, overcome the babble of misunderstanding among the nations, and let all people hear in their own language and recognize in their own culture your unifying message of love.

For planet earth, our home, Almighty God, hear our prayer. by your spirit, renew the earth, make us good stewards of its resources, and teach us to enjoy its abundance rightly.

For those in need of healing. Among those known to us, God, send your healing spirit upon those who are sick in body or mind, for all those suffering with the Covid 19 virus restore them to health, and restore to them the joy of salvation.

For the doctors, nurses, medical staff, first responders, our neighbors and members of our civic community, Almighty God, hear our prayer.

Teach us to be good neighbors, to live in peace with one another, and in friendship share

Bless our children, and all children of all nations, protect them from danger, and help parents and caregivers nurture them so that they may mature in wisdom and grow in grace.

For our enemies, Almighty God, hear our prayer. [brief pause] bless our enemies and show us how we may do good to them for the sake of Jesus Christ.

In your mercy, Almighty God, receive our prayers and, according to your wisdom, provide all that we need through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Be witnesses of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, who sits at the right hand of God in glory, and who sends the Holy Spirit to empower us for service in his name. Bless the Lord. Bless his Holy name. Alleluia!

In Christ's Name,

Pastor Karen