

## Pentecost Sermon, May 31, 2020

### Making a New People of God, Acts 2:1-21

Dear friends in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Creator, Jesus our Savior, and from the Unpredictable and Unquenchable Holy Spirit whose presence we celebrate this day. Amen. It is so very good to be back in our Lord's house and worship together. Christ is Risen. (He is Risen Indeed! Hallelujah).

Today is Pentecost. And most of us are familiar with the account of the events of that day. The disciples were gathered together in the Upper Room. Perhaps it was the same Upper Room where they meet with the Lord for Passover on Maundy Thursday, where He washed their feet, and gave them the supper of His body and blood. The same supper that we will partake of here today, in a few moments.

They had seen Jesus numerous time since His resurrection. They saw Him in this Upper Room on Easter, and there a week later with Thomas. And at the shore of the sea of Galilee, and many other places. A week and a half ago they saw Jesus ascend into heaven. So now what do we do? They keep gathering together in this Upper Room.

So what happened there? Suddenly there came a sound like a rushing mighty wind. And what looked like tongues of fire appeared on the heads of the Apostles. Jerusalem was full of people for the festival, and hearing the great wind, they came to see what was happening.

It was nine o'clock in the morning, and the Apostles began talking. And although there were people from everywhere, each of them heard his own language. And they were amazed. Yes, Jerusalem was full of people for the festival. What festival? Pentecost. Our text begins, "When the day of Pentecost had arrived."

So what was Pentecost? Pentecost was a Jewish festival, which God had commanded. Pentecost was 50 days after the Sunday after Passover. It was the festival of first fruits – that is the spring wheat harvest. We don't plant wheat here early enough for it come in May, but the weather is warm there, so the first harvest of wheat would happen about now. And at this feast all Jews were to come to Jerusalem – that is why the city was full of so many people from so many places.

In addition to the wheat harvest, at this festival they would remember of the giving of the 10 commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai. God told Moses to tell the Israelites, "you shall be my treasured people from all peoples, you will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." And the Lord sent Moses to tell the people to sanctify themselves. On the third day there was thunder and lightning on the Mountain, and then fire, for the Lord came down to the Mountain, and Moses went up to meet with the Lord. He warned Moses not to let the people, or even the priests, to come near the Mountain. Only Aaron, the high priest, and Moses, could go up the Mountain. And there the Lord

established Israel as His people, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage."

That is what happened in the wilderness, at Mt. Sinai, many years ago. That was the event that the Jews were remembering on Pentecost. How God choose them out of all people, and made a covenant with them. What then happens on this day, on Pentecost?

There is a rushing mighty wind, just like there had been lightning and thunder. Mt. Sinai glowed with fire as the Lord came down. Now, there were tongues of fire on the Apostle's heads. The Jews were remembering the day that the Lord made the old covenant with them. Now, in a similar way, He is declaring His covenant, and making a new people for Himself.

At Sinai, He declared how he had chosen them out of all the people of the world. Israel would be His chosen and special people. A kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Now, the Lord was making something new. Instead of choosing only one people out of many to be His Israel; He is choosing many people from many places and many languages, to be His one people, His new Israel.

Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit preached the good news of Christ to all who were there. And this same Peter would later write in His epistle these words which you know so well: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." God called Israel out of Egypt, out of slavery, into the promised land. He made them His chosen and special people. Now God has called many, He has called you His Church, to be His cherished and chosen people.

So we are living in Pentecost. At Passover the Jews remembered they were delivered from Egypt. At Easter we remember Christ victory over sin, death, and the grave. At Pentecost the Jews celebrated the first fruits of wheat. At Pentecost we see the first fruit of faith in Christ, how with the out pouring of the Spirit the Gospel is spreading to all people, even to us. We are living in Pentecost. We are part of the ongoing harvest of wheat in Christ, living in His kingdom, and waiting for the ingathering of all the harvest at His return on the Last Day.

God called Israel out of Egypt and He has called us out of the dark and into the light. But life can still seem dark. And we become discouraged. Discouraged with work, discouraged with our country, discouraged with our spouse and family, discouraged by illness, by loneliness. Discouraged by life. Discouraged with Covid-19. It's daylight outside. But when we pause from our busy and hectic living, when we stop thinking about everything around us, when we have a quiet moment, instead of joy and peace and happiness, it can feel dark and dreary in our hearts. Don't believe the dark. God has chosen you. You are important to Him.

You are His Church living in the kingdom of God. He poured out His Holy Spirit at Pentecost. At Mt. Sinai, Moses had to go up to the Lord. Now, the Lord by His Spirit has come down to you. Only Moses could see and speak to the Lord and hear from Him. But you, His Church, have the Holy Spirit. By the working of the Holy Spirit, You hear from the Lord, directly from Him in His Word. And you speak to Him in prayer.

The day of Pentecost is not just a day on the calendar or a day for remembering the past. Pentecost is a day of making a new people of God. A day of God choosing you. Will there be sorrows and trials? Yes, just as the Israelites had difficulties and trials. But You are God's chosen one. He has made for Himself a new people, and He has chosen You. And by His Spirit, we are living as His royal priesthood. The harvest is ongoing, as we await the return of our King Jesus. Christ is risen. (He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!)

And Christ shall come again. Amen.