

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Book of Acts the second chapter beginning at the first verse:

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because

everyone heard them speak in his own language. ⁷ Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? ⁸ "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹ "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ "Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Happy birthday! Well not to you personally; rather, it is a happy birthday to the entire Christian church. For it is said that Pentecost, which is today, is the ‘birthday of the Christian church.’ After all, the day of Pentecost is the day on which the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and allowed them to speak to all the people and to share the good news about Jesus Christ to those people in their own language.

In addition to the birthday of the church, Pentecost also marks the undoing of the Tower of Babel. We remember that while the people still lived in one place and spoke one language, they decided to build a tower that would reach to heaven so that they would never wander too far away. However, these people were disobeying God who told them to go and ‘subdue’ the entire world. When God saw that they were desiring their own ways and not His, He confused their language... He made them all speak

differently so that they could not talk with each other. And now that we have Pentecost, that is undone. The disciples are now taking the word of God to all the people in their own language... and Babel is undone.

Yes, Pentecost has many meanings and many things happened on this day nearly 2,000 years ago but perhaps none more important than Jesus Christ sending ‘the Helper.’ For we remember that before Jesus was killed, He promised to send the Helper who would teach the disciples all that they needed to know and give them the words they would need to spread the message of Christ to countless peoples... and that is what is happening today. Thus as we gather today, in God’s house, hearing God’s word, we would pray that He would send to us the Holy Spirit and that through Him and His word each and every one of us would be *filled with the Holy Spirit*.

We know that shortly after our text some of those around the disciples had some pretty negative things to say about what was going on. Instead of seeing God's hand at work, the people supposed that the disciples of Jesus were drunk and just babbling. Yet, we know that is not the case at all. Peter, in fact, tells us that it was hardly 10am and there was no drunkenness amongst the disciples... so this had to be something different, something special.

But isn't that the case, so often, when it comes to the working of God? We look at what God is doing and we do not see His hand in action; rather, we see 'drunk' people, or we see things that we are accomplishing, or we see man's hand at work... but not God.

This is most evident when one considers the concept of "free will." How many churches nowadays teach that man has something to

do with his salvation? How many churches teach that "I choose Jesus"? How many churches do not leave room for the Holy Spirit to do His work and rather give that work to man?

As our Apology states, "***For human hearts without the Holy Ghost are without the fear of God; without trust toward God, they do not believe that they are heard, forgiven, helped, and preserved by God. They are godless.***" Without the Holy Spirit, we are enemies of God... and yet people wish to teach that we can choose God, so very confusing.

Think back to those people at Babel. They wanted to completely disobey God and go in the complete opposite direction... were they honoring God? Were they following His will? Did they fear and trust in God that He knew what He was doing?

Now think to yourself... do you always trust in God? Do you always believe that God has your best in mind? Do you ever question God and what He is doing in your life?

While you may not be building a tower, how often have you turned your back on God and defied Him... were you His loving and obedient child then? Of course you weren't. You were an obstinate sinner. You treated God like He was some play thing, some less than nothing person or thing that could be toyed with however you chose. You were not loving and fearing Him, you were not honoring and extolling Him... you treated Him like garbage.

And so it was with those first people on Pentecost. God had a plan, a miracle was taking place, and all they could do was mock God and His disciples. Instead of seeing the hand of God in action, they mocked man and tried to make God look like a fool. Instead of listening and trusting God, they relied on

themselves and all they had done... do you suppose that the Spirit was strong within them?

You see, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it is not so we can speak in tongues or do all those other colorful things that some churches claim... no, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He allows us and helps us to trust in our God all the more.

We can trust that Jesus Christ was sent to this earth to live the perfect life and die the innocent death for each and every one of us. We can trust that Jesus took all of our guilt and punishment upon Himself as He hung on the cross suffering for our sins and paying the full atonement price. We can trust that Jesus Christ rose three days later to proclaim that His life and death were sufficient payment for all sins of all time... and through faith, which the Holy Spirit gives us

and strengthens, we can trust in Jesus Christ for the salvation which only He can provide.

As our catechism states, ***“I believe in the Holy Ghost... what does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”***

Yes, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it is when we recognize that by ourselves we are enemies of God and walking away from Him... but the Holy Spirit is placed inside of each and every one of us and He is constantly pulling us back to God.

The Spirit is placed inside of us when we are baptized into the cleansing flood of Jesus’

blood which was shed for me on the cross of Calvary. The Spirit is placed inside of us when we hear His word and are strengthened thereby. The Spirit is constantly within us so long as we are not grossly and willfully sinning against God and His commands.

As the Augsburg Confessions says, ***“Of free will they teach that man’s will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work things subject to reason. But it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received through the Word.”***

Dear friends in Christ, so often the Holy Spirit is the ‘forgotten’ person of the Trinity. We hear about God the Father and how He created us and sent His Son. We hear about

Jesus Christ and all that He has done for our salvation, but often the Holy Spirit can be overlooked... however, on Pentecost, we make sure to take time to truly look at the work that the Holy Spirit does for each and every one of us. When He was initially sent, He was sent to enlighten the disciples and to allow them to communicate with all the peoples of the earth so that they might know Jesus Christ and Him crucified for their sins.

Nowadays, the Holy Spirit is still just as active in our churches and all over the world. He is fighting the battle within each and every one of us; helping our new man fend off that Old Adam. He is strengthening us through the faith that He creates and strengthens within us. He is bringing people to Christ when they hear the word of God preached and they do not put up resistance to it.

I mean, arguably, the Holy Spirit is the most active of the three to this day... and it is a shame that He is so often overlooked. But on a day like Pentecost it is great to remember and focus on all that He has done for us to bring us to the gates of heaven.

Yes, the Holy Spirit has called us by the gospel, yes He has enlightened us, and still to this day He sanctifies us. He helps us to live a God pleasing life: focusing on God's laws and focusing on our Savior when we do not live up to them all.

Thanks be to God for loving us so much.
Thanks be to God for sending His Holy Spirit upon us to strengthen and enlighten us. And thanks be to God for filling us with His Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God. Amen.