

# Season of EASTER

## Prayer

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

For the Holy Spirit who breathes life into dry bones, that He would guide us into all truth by means of His Word, and convicting us thereby of our sin and revealing to us the righteousness we have in Jesus Christ alone, would free us from the judgment that is coming upon this world when the great Day of the Lord comes. Let us pray to the Lord; Lord, have mercy.

For the Holy Spirit who breathes life into dry bones, that He would cast the bright beams of His light upon the Church that we, being instructed in the doctrine of the blessed prophets and apostles, may walk in the light of His truth, be raised from the deadness of sin, confess Jesus Christ alone as Lord and Saviour, and at length attain to the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. Let us pray to the Lord; Lord, have mercy.

For the Holy Spirit who breathes life into dry bones, that He would give life to those who are dead in sin by blessing the apostolic Word of repentance and forgiveness, of condemnation and salvation that is being proclaimed in many different languages throughout the world in our day. Let us pray to the Lord; Lord, have mercy.

For the Holy Spirit who breathes life into dry bones, that He would turn the hearts of those who have forsaken the faith that has once for all been delivered to the Church, that they would come to repentance, take pleasure again in the divine Word of truth and life, and so be made wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Let us pray to the Lord; Lord, have mercy.

For the Holy Spirit who breathes life into dry bones, that all who have authority over us, especially our prime minister, the parliament, our premier, and all who make, administer and judge our laws will fulfill their civic duties, recognizing that they are Your instruments in caring for and promoting stability and tranquility in our communities. Let us pray to the Lord; Lord, have mercy.

For the Holy Spirit who breathes life into dry bones, that He would bestow His care and healing upon the afflicted and distressed, the sick and the hospitalized [especially \_\_\_\_\_] that they may rejoice in His manifold help and comfort. Let us pray to the Lord; Lord, have mercy.

Into Your hands, O heavenly Father, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Collect of the Day

O God, on this day You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy consolation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Scripture Readings

Psalm 139:1-12 (13-16)

(antiphon v. 17)

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Acts 2:1-21

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

## Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 497

Other Hymns – 500 (OT), 650

(OT), 503 (SR), 768 (G), 840 (G),

496, 501



# PENTECOST SERMON

## THE DAY OF PENTECOST

May 23, 2021

**Sermon Text: Acts 2:1-21**

*'The Spirit's Convicting, Convincing Word'*

Fifty days after the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, there was the harvest festival. There was Pentecost! It was an ingathering of the winter wheat, and the celebration of the Torah or Law given to Moses on the mountain of Sinai . . . and where, by the way, there was wind and fire.

Fifty days after the Jesus' 'Passover' from death to life, there comes along a harvest festival and an ingathering of the first-fruits. This time however, the fruit is a crop of three thousand baptized people added to the number of the disciples in one day. And again there is wind and fire. The wind is heard; the fire is seen.

The wind is the breath of the crucified, risen, and now reigning Lord Jesus blowing out over His Church by the Spirit. And through His breath He delivers His Word through the mouth of simple Galileans . . . men who had never taken a language course before, but now everyone was hearing the "Good News of Jesus Christ" in his own language and dialect. They were hearing the Gospel. "For you" . . . with no doubt about it.

And there was fire. Tongues of fire were seen resting on each of the 120 gathered disciples . . . including Mary, the mother of Jesus. John the Baptizer had told them, "I baptize you with water, but the One who is coming, who is greater than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." And this now is the completion of their baptism with the promised fire of the Holy Spirit.

Remember, fire goes back to Moses and the burning bush. There Christ appeared to Moses in a bush that was on fire but was not consumed. A Gospel fire. So also here at Pentecost. Tongues of fire rested on each one of the believers – a visible

sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and they in turn spoke in tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Those who heard it were bewildered, amazed, astonished, and even perplexed. “What does this mean?” they wondered. Good question. It’s not every day that you get wind and fire from heaven. In fact, this is the only day this has ever happened.

Now, some were less charitable and mocked the disciples, saying, “They are filled with new wine” . . . a rather stupid remark to be quite frank. After all, add more wine to one’s body and one’s language skills do not improve; they deteriorate greatly – slurred speech, unintelligible speech.

But Peter, who barely opened his mouth when asked by a servant girl if he was one of Jesus’ disciples, now, fifty days later, explains all these happenings by boldly quoting from the prophet Joel to thousands of hostile listeners. What changed? Two things: first, Peter had seen the risen Lord; and second, he had received the promised Holy Spirit.

“These are the last days,” Peter says, quoting Joel, “when God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh.” Did you catch it? The last days are the Holy Spirit’s days, and so Pentecost begins the end times . . . the time of the Holy Spirit. What began with the Father’s love at Christmas . . . “sending forth His Son born of a virgin”; continued with the Son through Holy Week and Easter . . . “the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world”; and now carries on with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

But here’s the big question: Why do you need the Holy Spirit? Jesus Himself answers: “He will convict the world of sin.” Not simply ‘sins’ – bad thoughts, evil words, or wicked deeds. But rather, ‘Sin’ with a capital ‘S’. The corruption that goes to the very core of our humanity and renders everything we do sinful no matter how good it may appear.

The Holy Spirit is not some heavenly principal whose office you get called to when your bad. That’s not the way He deals with sin. Symptoms are one thing, but diagnosing the disease is quite another. And we sin because we have the capital ‘S’ sin. We are by nature sinful; and, as a result, everything we think, do, and say, no matter how beautiful, wonderful, and nice, is tainted and corrupted by sin. And that’s what the world needs convicting of, and, yes, we too.

And constantly so! Otherwise, we will begin to justify ourselves – the very thing that renders Jesus’ work useless to us. After all, if you can justify yourself and your actions; what point is there in being justified for Jesus’ sake?

Now, the Holy Spirit will also “convict the world of righteousness.” Jesus ascends to the Father, glorifying our humanity at the Father’s right hand. But we can’t follow Him. Not the way we are. No, sin is what we have; righteousness is what we lack . . . spiritually naked. We need, as such, to be clothed . . . covered in a righteousness that is not our own.

And this clothing analogy is one that we can easily understand. After all, we have clothes for all sorts of occasions . . . work clothes, church clothes, beach clothes, casual clothes, and the like. And so, in order to be with our heavenly Father we need a change of clothing. Our unrighteous rags just won’t cut it. Like the man in Jesus’ parable of the king’s son’s wedding banquet who appeared without the proper wedding attire, we cannot appear before God clothed in our own so-called righteousness and good deeds but which actually are, as the Scriptures say, “like filthy rags.” Adam and Eve tried to sew their own clothing to cover themselves, but self-stitched fig leaves are as effective as the fig leaves of our own works.

Ultimately, God must provide the clothing, in their case, skins. They were covered in sacrifice. In our case, Christ and His righteousness, His sacrifice . . . and through which the Father looks at us. To be baptized is to be clothed with Christ. And that’s the Spirit’s work as well, as we see at the end of the account of Pentecost . . . 3,000 souls were baptized and added to the number of believers, clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness.

And only dressed in this manner can you, too, appear before the Father. Not your righteousness, but Christ’s righteousness. Not your so-called good deeds, but Christ’s good deed on the cross and at the empty tomb. Like Jacob of old, who disguised himself to feel and smell like his brother Esau to obtain the blessing from his father Isaac, so we are now covered with Christ and obtain the blessing of our heavenly Father.

Now, there is one more thing Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of . . . that is, concerning judgment. And which is the inevitable result of the collision of sin and righteousness. And the Spirit will testify that the ruler of this world has already been judged – judged when Christ became our sin on the cross, suffering justly for that sin, so that, baptized into Him, we have become His righteousness.

The devil would love for you to reject this, to stand here in unbelief, to instead have you attempt to justify yourself with your piety, your good works for others, your prayers . . . anything you do that you think obligates God to you. But in the face of such temptation, the Holy Spirit is hard at work convicting us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The three things the world does not believe in or trust God with, the Holy Spirit is busy convicting the world of . . . and using one tool to accomplish His work – the Word of God.

We don't hear a mighty wind blowing through our church buildings on this Day of Pentecost, nor do we see tongues of fire resting on anyone. But we do hear the Gospel.

We're not called to try and re-create that first Pentecost . . . though some might try! Instead, we are to listen to the Holy Spirit who testifies about Christ and points us to Him . . . which means the ongoing work of Pentecost is not in wind or fire or suddenly speaking in other languages, but rather, in the Word and Baptism and the Holy Supper. At the close of his account of that first Pentecost, St. Luke notes that those first Christians simply “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the Breaking of the Bread and the prayers.”

Pentecost . . . fifty days . . . the ingathering of the harvest of souls . . . the Word . . . the Church. You are a part of it – called, gathered, enlightened, sanctified, kept in the faith by the Spirit. And to whom we thus pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, warm our cold and lifeless hearts with your Gospel fire.  
Come, Holy Spirit, rattle our dry and dusty bones and make them live.  
Come, Holy Spirit, loosen our tongues to speak the good news of Jesus.  
Come, Holy Spirit, quench our fevered thirst with the waters of Baptism.  
Come, Holy Spirit, satisfy our hunger for righteousness with the Body and Blood of our Saviour.

Come, Holy Spirit, put the good news of Jesus into our ears, our minds, our hearts that we may hear it, comprehend it, and believe it.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love.

In the Name of Jesus, Amen.