

"The Vision of Pentecost"

Text: John 14:21-31

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you from God our Father, from our Lord Jesus Christ, and from the Comforter, God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Fellow Recipients of the gifts of Pentecost:

Look around you and you will notice that eyeglasses are more common than not – or at least some form of vision correction. In fact if you are 50 years or better and *don't* need vision correction, count yourself among the rare 5% or so that don't. If you do wear glasses, you probably remember that moment when you saw the world with corrected vision for the first time. The deterioration in your vision was probably so gradual that you had no idea what you had been missing until it was returned to you. Everything was instantly sharper, crisper, clearer. Colors were more vivid and vibrant and the trees had actual, individual leaves, not just vague blurry green blotches clinging to the fuzzy branches.

Now if you can relate to the simple pleasure of having your vision *corrected*, imagine the thrill of having been born blind, and then miraculously being given the ability to see anything at all for the first time. Most of us enter the world seeing, and we spend the first few years of our lives learning to process what we see. How different for someone who has learned to process all incoming information without the benefit of sight to suddenly have the gift of vision added to the mix. How different to realize that a sunrise is more than just added warmth in the morning, to see shadows shifting throughout the day, and to see what it is that produces the water that wets you when it rains. Imagine the profound misconceptions that would be instantly corrected, and the clarity that would replace what had previously existed only as vague conceptions – many of which would prove to be *dramatically* wrong.

In a very real sense, all of this serves as a fairly accurate metaphor of the event that we celebrate this morning, Pentecost, and how that singular event has affected every single one of us here today. It is this event, this phenomenon, that we will examine in greater detail this morning, examining not only both what Pentecost is and what it is not, but the benefits that it provides to each of us every moment of every day. Our text for this Pentecost Sunday is found in John's Gospel, the 14th Chapter:

ESV (John 14:21-31) *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by*

my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." ²² ***Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"*** ²³ ***Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."*** ²⁴ ***Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me."*** ²⁵ ***"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you."*** ²⁶ ***But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*** ²⁷ ***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*** ²⁸ ***You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I."*** ²⁹ ***And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe."*** ³⁰ ***I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me,*** ³¹ ***but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."***

So far the very words of God the Holy Spirit. This is, of course, the same Holy Spirit who gave those special gifts to the Church on the first Pentecost, and who is celebrated among us today. With true reverence for these words, we pray, ***"Sanctify us by Your Truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."*** Amen.

As most of you know, each week we collect an offering here at St. Paul to be used in the work of the Church. Each week that offering is counted by volunteers from the congregation, each week it is deposited by the Church Council member entrusted with that task, and each week a deposit slip from that transaction is passed along to the Church Treasurer. Understanding therefore the system that is in place, answer this question: What is the function or value of the deposit slip that is presented each week to the Treasurer, especially in relation to the money it represents? The answer is that the deposit slip really only has value in the area of information or verification. You can't buy even a cup of coffee with a deposit slip, yet that same slip might verify that a small fortune has been deposited into your account.

Why talk about deposit slips on Pentecost Sunday? Because deposit slips can teach us something about Pentecost. When Christians today hear mention of Pentecost, an alarming number conjure up images of

ecstatic utterances known today as "speaking in tongues." In fact Pentecost itself has been diminished in the minds of countless Christians to images of strange and somewhat frightening outbursts of emotional religious fervor.

What we are then left with is a situation where the outward manifestation or proof of Pentecost has been promoted to the point that it has almost become the event itself. The Bible teaches us, however, that Pentecost is not all about tongues, or faith healings, or handling snakes, or any such thing. Pentecost is about the personal, indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit, poured out upon the New Testament Christian Church on this day. It is about wisdom, depth of understanding, and courage of commitment. It is about gaining, or sharpening, our Christian "vision."

This is where deposit slips come into play. Tongues are to Pentecost what deposit slips are to money in the bank. In other words, just as deposit slips are nowhere near as important as the funds they verify, so too the gift of tongues was intended as the outward verification that the incalculable gift of the Holy Spirit had truly been deposited in full measure on the Day of Pentecost into God's New Testament Church. How foolish then to focus upon (and assign top billing to) the deposit slip (tongues) rather than to the infinitely more valuable commodity it verifies (strength of faith, wisdom, sight, and insight).

The interesting thing about the present confusion is that the original Pentecost is not at all hard to understand. It is not difficult to see what God did for the Church on that particular occasion. Our confusion comes as a result of what man has said and written about Pentecost since that time. Man has turned Pentecost into something that it is not, and therein lies the confusion. The first thing we will note is that the most common perversions of this day were probably created, at least in part, by spiritual laziness.

In a society that lives and breathes for instant gratification - in everything from food to the purchase of a car or home - it should not surprise us that the craving for "instant" has crept into the spiritual. Understand this well. There is only one source through which all of the mysteries of God are learned - the Bible. There is no shortcut. God no longer works directly from heaven to man. He has chosen to work through "means." Think of the water that comes out of your faucets. That water doesn't go directly from the well or reservoir into your cook pot. The "means" it takes to get the water from the ground to your kettle is a network of pipes. The Holy Spirit has chosen to work through means instead of working directly. The "pipe" or means through which he works is his Word, whether spoken, written, or connected to a sacrament. That is why the Bible says, "***Faith comes through hearing the message (of Christ Jesus).***" That is also why

Peter in his first post-Pentecost sermon said, "***Repent and be baptized...for the forgiveness of sins...***" God has chosen not to work directly from heaven in man. He has chosen to work through the Word.

The problem with the modern misconception of Pentecost is that mankind wants to believe that it is some sort of shortcut to spiritual knowledge and growth - a notion that is nonsense born of pure spiritual laziness. The reasoning seems to be that since the first Apostles both learned a foreign language without first studying it and had their spiritual vision or understand instantly clarified, therefore we can even today obtain an instant grasp of the Word of God directly from the Holy Spirit. We should therefore never have to go through the challenging and time-consuming process of studying the Bible. That's not the way it works, but that exactly what the devil wants us to believe. What more fertile grounds for the corruption of God's Word than a church lead by men who have never really studied the Word of God? In fact the only chance that Satan has to destroy souls is when human beings rely not on that pure, rock-solid Word of God, but on their own "personal inner light" to guide their understanding. How many churches are even now paying the price for allowing themselves to be guided by an "inner light" which they mistakenly believe to be God the Holy Spirit working directly in them?

Our text for this morning reminds us that Pentecost was indeed given to the Church for a reason, but that reason was certainly not to encourage spiritual laziness or the neglect of his Word. Our Old Testament Lesson for this morning (Genesis 11:1-9) provided the background for the *need* of the special gift of languages given to the Apostles on the first Pentecost. God had to confuse the speech of the people at the Tower of Babel so that they would obey his command to disperse and fill the earth. At the first Pentecost, God gave to his Church the means to instantly overcome this obstacle. He did so by blessing the Apostles with the ability to speak that all-important Word in different languages, instantly. Unfortunately, as we noted earlier, mankind has since elevated this one small aspect of that first Pentecost into superstar status.

This gift of languages, or tongues, was in fact a relatively small part of the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was both a visible proof and a means to communicate. You will note, in fact, that only when the Apostles started to *communicate the Word* were the real gifts of Pentecost revealed. Prior to Pentecost the disciples were bogged down with multiple misconceptions: Jesus came only for the Jews, Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom, Jesus' followers would be given positions of earthly power, etc. They also spent the days after Jesus' crucifixion

locked away in seclusion – passive and terrified.

And then came Pentecost - the Gift of the promised Holy Spirit. The audio/visual *proof* that something was different was of course the tongues of fire and the speaking in different languages. The far greater gifts were equally evident. First, from this point on Jesus' men never again appeared uncertain or unclear about the gospel. Second, they no longer hid in fear. Finally, these first missionaries no longer hoarded the Word of Truth but freely and boldly shared it with the spiritually impoverished world of their day. They never again retreated, willingly suffering even hardship, persecution, and death rather than abandon, alter, or hide even one doctrine that their Lord had taught them. This is the very gift that Jesus promised to his Church in our text when he said, ***"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*** What not even Jesus, with his three-year physical presence, could do for these men the Holy Spirit accomplished in an instant.

Here is where we return to the metaphor of vision correction. The disciples could see, but they could not see clearly. They believed, in other words, but they lacked understanding and clarity. This God himself corrected through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Yet to others, it wasn't just clarity that the Holy Spirit provided; it was vision itself, saving faith itself. The blind were given sight. Think back again to Peter's sermon immediately after Pentecost. Though many in that crowd were likely among those who screamed for Jesus' crucifixion, they were cut to the heart by Peter's words. How? Why? Because the Holy Spirit was working through those words to create the miracle of saving faith in their hearts. The result? 3000 souls were enabled to see for the first time.

You and I are also recipients therefore of the true gifts of Pentecost. If you were baptized as an infant, the Holy Spirit not only created faith through that miracle, he has been correcting your vision through the power of his Word ever since. If he gave you your sight later in life, perhaps the change was more dramatic. Yet know that the Holy Spirit accomplishes all of these miracles through the same gifts, the same power, that he gave to his Church at that first Pentecost. You and I are therefore the direct beneficiaries of that event we celebrate this morning – and those gifts are both absolutely priceless and marvelously eternal.

Recognize and treasure then not just what was done for or given to *others* on that first Pentecost, but what was done for and given to you. This is also the answer to Judas' question in our text: ***"How will you make yourself known to us, and not to the world?"*** He did so by filling your

hearts with his Holy Spirit, thereby enabling you to see and believe the truth. And now he uses that same power of his Word to preserve you in that truth, until he finally takes you home. Thank God for Pentecost! Amen.

Scripture Readings

ESV **Genesis 11:1-9** Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." ⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶ And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

ESV **Acts 2:1-6** When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ ¶ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

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Pentecost – June 9, 2019

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 224 (Red Hymnal)

"Come Holy Ghost, God and Lord"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Genesis 11:1-9) Mankind sinned against God's command to "fill and subdue the earth" by attempting to build one grand, central city around the Tower of Babel. God frustrated this sin by confusing the languages of man. This set the stage for *one of the elements* of the event we celebrate on this day – Pentecost – which was the special gift or ability to speak in other tongues or languages. God thereby made provision for the punishment he visited upon mankind at the Tower of Babel.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 51 (Page 31)

The Second Lesson: (Acts 2:1-6) This is the account of the event we celebrate on this Sunday in the Church Year – Pentecost. Again, speaking in different languages was by no means the greatest gift given on this day. That special ability was an outward manifestation or proof of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God's Church in the New Testament era. On this day then we seek to understand and thank God for Pentecost.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 226 (Verses 1-7) (Red Hymnal)

"Come, Oh, Come, Thou Quickening Spirit"

The Sermon – Text: John 14:21-31 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"The Vision of Pentecost"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post Sermon Hymn -225 (Red Hymnal)

"Come, Holy Spirit, Come"

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 226 (Verses 8-9) (Red Hymnal)

"Come, Oh, Come, Thou Quickening Spirit"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (44) Average (35)

This Week at St. Paul:

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| Today | -10:00 a.m. | – Worship Service |
| | -11:00 a.m. | – Fellowship and coffee hour |
| | -5:00 p.m. | – Call meeting in Ipswich |
| Next Sunday | -10:00 a.m. | – Worship Service |
| | -11:00 a.m. | – Fellowship and coffee time |
| | -11:30 a.m. | – Church Council Meeting |

CLC News – ILC professor nominations to fill the upcoming vacancy at ILC are now being accepted. See Pastor Roehl for more details. Teacher Paul Tiefel has been called to both Holy Trinity of West Columbia and Faith of Markesan. Teacher graduate June Schmid has been called to St. John's of Okabena. Pastor Michael Wilke has returned the call to Bethel of Morris.

Bowdle Ipswich Call Meeting – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to conduct a call meeting in Ipswich this evening.

Summer Schedule – We have entered our summer schedule, which means that, through Labor Day, Bible Class and Sunday school are suspended.

Black Hills Camping Trip – This summer's Black Hills Family Bible Camp has been scheduled for Friday evening, July 19th, through Tuesday morning, July 23rd. In addition to daily Bible Study, planned activities include hiking, swimming, fishing, kayaking, bonfires, s'mores etc...To sign up or for more information please call Pastor Aaron Ude at (605) 393-1311 or email him at aaronude@gmail.com.

The Lutheran Spokesman – Renewals for the Lutheran Spokesman are now due. The sign-up sheet is on the mailbox table, where you will find more information. If you do not currently subscribe, but wish to in the future, please fill out the required information on the second information sheet. Payment can be included in the regular offering box.