

## Pentecost

Ps.67:1 – 3  
Ps.118:1  
Ps.118:6, 8  
Hymn 38:1, 2, 4  
Ps.66:1, 2

Scripture reading: Lev.23: 9 – 21; Acts 2:1 – 47  
**Text: Acts 2: 37 – 47**

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Usually when we hear the word “Pentecost”, we think first of all of the work of the Holy Spirit. However, when the apostle Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost to address the multitude, his preaching is about Christ. He preaches a sermon on the resurrection of Christ and of the work which Christ is now continuing in heaven.

Pentecost is therefore not something which we celebrate once a year. Instead, what happened on the day of Pentecost is a climax in the revelation of the glory of Christ, a climax in the work which Christ has wrought.

Pentecost also points to the second coming of Christ. And therefore the message of Pentecost is a message which inspires and inflames us not only once a year. Instead, it is part of the gospel from which we live every day.

I proclaim the Word of the Lord to you with the theme:  
**Pentecost is the fruit of Christ’s resurrection.**

We will note...

- i. What Pentecost mean
- ii. That Pentecost is part of the promise of the covenant
- iii. That Pentecost guarantees the community of the covenant

First we want to know...

### **I. What Pentecost means**

In the Old Testament Pentecost was called the feast of the first fruits. During this feast the first fruits of the harvest had to be devoted to the Lord. A sheaf of the first grain had to be brought in on the first day of the week – on the day after the Sabbath. The offering of new grain had to be presented fifty days later, also on the first day of the week – the day after the seventh Sabbath. And this is where the word Pentecost comes from. Pentecost means fiftieth – referring to the fifty days between the first sheaf of grain and the offering of new grain.

It is clear then that Pentecost refers to Christ and what Christ has done. He was the first sheaf of grain, the firstfruit of the harvest. Scripture speaks about Christ as the beginning, the firstborn from the dead - Col.1:18; Rev.1:5. "...Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" – 1Cor. 15:20.

Christ was the first to rise from the dead – Acts 26:23.

When we hear this, that Christ is called the beginning of the harvest, the firstborn from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, and that He was the first to rise from the dead, we are reminded of the feast of the firstfruits. We also note that every time when Christ is called the first of the harvest, Scripture joins it together with His resurrection from the dead. He is the first of a countless multitude who will be raised from the dead.

Christ's resurrection, as we will see, has become the guarantee that the rest of the harvest will also follow; our resurrection is the infallible fruit of His death and resurrection.

Also in 1Cor.15 where the apostle deals with the resurrection of the dead, he says that Christ is the firstfruits, and that the rest will be made alive at His second coming – verse 23.

And so the feast of the firstfruits finds its first fulfillment on the day of Pentecost here in Acts chapter 2. That is why the apostle Peter explains the events of Pentecost with a sermon on Christ's death and resurrection, **because, that** is what Pentecost is about.

The sermon of the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, that is fifty days after Christ's resurrection, is about nothing but the death and resurrection of Christ and the fruit that comes from this.

First he says that the events of this day are the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. And then? We would expect a sermon on the Holy Spirit and the work of the Spirit, would we not? Or a sermon on the gifts of the Spirit, the gift of prophesy and the speaking in tongues.

But no, Peter draws the attention of the multitude to Christ and His resurrection from the dead. And he explains it from Psalm 16:8 – 11.

In Acts 2 from verses 22 – 32 he shows that Jesus is the Christ who had to die, but who – according to the Scriptures – rose again.

And now? That which you now see and hear, the powerful way in which the Holy Spirit was poured out, is the work of this Jesus whom you have crucified. He sits at the right hand of God, **He** is Lord and Christ. And it is He, Jesus Christ, who has poured out His Spirit according to the promise.

He reigns at the right hand of the Father until the Father will make all His enemies a footstool for his feet. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!

Do you see what the apostle's message contains on the day of Pentecost? Jesus is the Christ. He died and was raised as the prophets have spoken. He is no longer in the grave. He sits at God's right hand and it is He who poured out the Spirit of God. He is the Lord and all His enemies will be put under His feet.

**That** is the message of Pentecost. When the multitude hear **this**, and that there is salvation in the Name of this Jesus, the Christ – who was raised from the dead and who reigns at the right hand of God – three thousand of them repented and believed.

It happens on the feast of firstfruits. It was to celebrate this very feast of firstfruits that they were all gathered. And now the shadow finds its fulfillment. The 3000 who believed were the new grain offering to the Lord, a congregation of Christ sanctified for God. The sheaf of grain became bread, the firstfruits to the Lord, according to Lev.23.

We have to note carefully that all these things happened as it was prescribed in the law of Moses. Christ dies as the Passover Lamb on the precise day of the appointed month on which the Passover lamb had to be slaughtered – all according to the prescriptions in the law of Moses. And He rises as the firstfruits from the dead on the day of the firstfruits. Fifty days after His resurrection the Holy Spirit is poured out, on the fiftieth day, that is: the day of Pentecost, and 3000 are made alive in Christ. They are the firstfruits of the great harvest which Christ is now gathering in His barn. They are the fruit of His resurrection.

Pentecost shows Christ to us, His resurrection and also the fruit of His resurrection and His glorification. The glorious harvest which Christ wrought by His death, His Spirit is now gathering in.

It happens through the simple words of Peter that Christ died for us and rose again from the dead. This Jesus is the Christ, our Lord, who will also come to judge. Let everyone repent of his sins and believe the gospel.

We too, who are together here, are part of this harvest being gathered in.

Now that we know what Pentecost means, we will note in the second place...

## **II. That Pentecost is part of the promise of the covenant**

Peter stands up proclaiming to everyone that the last days have come; the last days of which the prophet Joel prophesied. It is the last days before the judgment of God will come.

The apostle reminds us of the coming judgment, and in this context he proclaims redemption: "...everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved" (verse 21). And the redemption, he says, is in Christ who died for us, who rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God.

The crowd who shouted: "Crucify, crucify Him!" is now cut to the heart. Not because Peter is such a good speaker or lecturer using such convincing and logical arguments; also not because their healthy minds and good reason convinces them

of the truth. No, when they hear the gospel they are cut to the heart, because the Holy Spirit gave them faith.

Thousands did not believe. The whole of Israel was gathered for this feast, but only 3000 believed the message. And *no* one would ever have believed. But now the biggest wonder of Pentecost happens: sinners come to repentance and faith! Because the Holy Spirit is poured out in their hearts.

The apostle Peter continues his preaching and he applies the message of salvation in the following way; he says:

**“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” – verses 38, 39.**

Repent! Repentance is the dying of the old nature and the coming to life of the new. The dying of the old nature is to grieve with heartfelt sorrow that we have offended God by our sin, and more and more to hate it and flee from it. The coming to life of the new nature is a heartfelt joy in God through Christ, and a love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works. And it is the Holy Spirit who works this in us.

Christ is proclaimed and the Spirit works faith. *This* is the work of the Spirit of which we read on the day of Pentecost.

The simple fisherman, Peter, is inspired by the Spirit to preach Christ. And through the simple and plain exposition of the Scriptures, the Spirit works faith in their hearts, and thousands believe.

The apostle does not give a dogmatic exposition to them of what repentance should be. And he does not give a systematic explanation of how it should happen, or a method, or a recipe. No, he simply says: Repent! And through the preaching of the gospel the Holy Spirit grants it to them.

We too have to repent; every day. As often as we go astray, so often the Lord calls us to repentance and faith and obedience.

Let us then, while we listen to the wonder which Christ gave to others on the day of Pentecost, realize also our own sin and guilt before God, and with confession of our sins turn to Christ and believe the gospel.

This new life which the Spirit gives us in Christ is a life of faith and obedience, of repentance and sanctification, a life in which we grow in the unity of the faith, standing firm in the truth; a life of love and sacrifice.

Brothers and sisters, we received the Holy Spirit, and we know this not through some strange experience, but through a new life of obedience through faith in Christ. By this the work of the Spirit is known.

The gift of the Spirit, and also to be filled with the Spirit, is part of the promise of the covenant. The promise which Christ has given that He will pour out His Spirit, that He will baptize with His Spirit and with fire, is part of the promise which God already made with Abraham.

For it is through the Spirit of God that we are raised from our spiritual death. It is through the Spirit that we receive faith and all the treasures and riches which are in Christ. It is through the Spirit that we are engrafted into Christ and became children of God. It is in this way that God becomes **our** God and that the promise finds its fulfillment.

Without the working of the Spirit no faith is possible, no adoption as children, **no fulfillment of the promise.**

In other words, it is the Holy Spirit who makes us to share in all the blessings of the covenant. It is the Spirit who unites us to Christ and to all His riches. It is through the Spirit that we call: Father!

It is through the Spirit that we walk in communion with God as our God.

This promise is also for our children. As the Apostle says: "...the promise is to you and to your children..." – Acts 2:39. That is: the believer and his children.

The promise is also for our children. This gospel was signed and sealed to them at their baptism.

But the promise stretch out even further: the promise is also "to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call". That is the heathens who were far from God, to whom the gospel will now be preached, those whom the Lord will call through His Word and Spirit.

We are not Jews by nature. We are not the physical descendants of Abraham. And yet we are reckoned to be his children – all who believe in Christ (Gal.3: 29). It no longer makes any difference to which people or race we belong. We, who were afar off, may now also hear the gospel and receive the promise of adoption.

The promise to be filled with the Spirit of God is also to us.

Repent and believe the gospel, and you will be filled with the Spirit.

What does that mean?

The visible outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost, is not repeated over and over again at the conversion of each individual. The signs and wonders which took place at Pentecost were part of the signs and wonders which characterized the ministry of Christ and also the whole ministry of the apostles. As we read in Hebrews 2:4 that the signs and wonders and miracles and gifts of the Spirit were to testify to the divine origin of the gospel. But when God had completed His revelation of this gospel, the wonders and miracles which characterized the time of the apostles have ceased.

The signs and the wonders were given with a specific purpose: it was God testifying to the fact that the Word preached by the apostles was indeed from God.

But God has completed His revelation and gave it to us in the Scriptures. His work of revelation through the prophets and apostles has come to completion. His Word has been given to us in writing, and no one may add to it. God does not give new revelations today which may be added to His Word. He does not give new prophets or new prophecies. No, the church is being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. That foundation is laid once and for all.

After the day of Pentecost it did indeed happen that the apostles placed their hands on people and that they received the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the gospel in other languages (Acts 19:6). And on all their mission journeys signs and wonders took place. But, it was a very specific time in which God was revealing His Word through the apostles; and that time has come to an end. We do not need new signs and wonders today, because we **have** God's Word. The signs and wonders which we should believe are written down for us in the Bible. Through **those** signs and wonders God witnessed to the fact that the apostles were sent by Him, and that the gospel truly came from God. But God doesn't need to confirm the gospel to us today through **new** signs and wonders.

He wants us simply to believe His Word. And in His Word all the signs and wonders are written down for us, and they still have the same power to confirm God's Word to us when we read them.

The Lord does not have to repeat the signs and the wonders which He has done in Egypt; they are preserved in holy Scriptures and in the hearts of everyone who believe. He doesn't have to repeat the wonders and the signs which He has done through Elijah, for they are engrafted in our hearts when we read the Scriptures. The same applies for the signs and wonders of Pentecost.

Various charismatic movements teach that Pentecost has to repeat itself over and over again. According to them every one who receive the faith has to experience Pentecost anew by speaking in tongues, prophesying, and by experiencing new wonders and signs.

But this is not the meaning of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was not poured out to entertain us with all sorts of experiences and with signs and wonders. The Holy Spirit was poured out to grant us faith in Christ, to unite us with Christ, and to sanctify us in Christ, in order that we will more and more live in and through Christ.

Pentecost shows us the firstfruits of Christ's death and resurrection that is gathered in His barn. Three thousand repent and believe. That is what Christ has done on Pentecost. And that He still continues to do. The promise to be filled with His Spirit is for us and for our children and to all who hear and believe the gospel.

After the apostle proclaimed the promise to them and reminded them of the judgment that is to come, we read in verse 40:

“And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying: Be saved from this  
perverse generation”

The perverse generation of which he speaks, was very religious. It was especially the scribes and Pharisees and the religious Jews who rejected Christ. The corrupt generation is not only the heathens who walk in darkness who never heard the gospel.

But all those religious men who did not put their trust in Christ; they are called a wicked generation.

Yet, with the words “perverse generation” he means also the wickedness of the world in which we live. And he warns us that we have to flee from it. Yes, with many other words he warned them and he pleaded with them: Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.

Exhort also your children to repent and to flee from the pollution of this world, to be alert and to walk carefully. For the promise is also to them with the command: repent and believe.

The Spirit calls us and our children continually through the proclamation of this gospel, also at home with family devotions. There the Spirit is present to fill us with faith and love and knowledge and hope. As often as we listen to the gospel and make it our own through faith, the Spirit fills us with joy in the Lord, and equip us with every gift we need to serve God.

In the third place we will note...

### **III. That Pentecost guarantees the communion of the covenant**

Christ is gathering a congregation for Himself.

Titus 2:14 says that Christ “gave Himself for us, that He may redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” Here we see it so clearly with Pentecost. Through His death Christ has purified a special people for Himself, zealous for good works. When the Spirit gives faith to the elect to trust in Christ, they become one people, a holy people, zealous for good works.

We read it here in our text that those who gladly received the word “continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” – verse 42.

These are the marks of a true church. Those who believed also continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine. It means they were eager to be equipped with the Word of the Lord. They continued steadfastly in it, not departing from it to the left or to the right. They preserved the word **as** the apostles preached it to them. That they continued steadfastly in the doctrine of the apostles also means that they **lived** according to it.

They also continued steadfastly in the fellowship. The fellowship does not only refer to the fellowship of the apostles, but also the fellowship with one another – the fellowship or communion of the saints. This fellowship includes mutual exhortation and encouragement, to edify one another in the faith and to correct one another. This fellowship also includes church discipline.

They also continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread; that is: in celebrating the Lord's Supper.  
And they continued steadfastly in prayers.

They immediately form one community, one body in Christ, all continuing steadfastly in the true doctrine and in the communion of saints – a congregation zealous for good works, a people whom Christ purified for Himself through His death and made alive through His resurrection.

This also is the work of the Spirit; **therefore** they continued steadfastly. It is the Spirit who inflames them and joins them together. Therefore all who believed were together – verse 44.

We read: "...all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need" – verse 44, 45.

That they had everything in common does not mean that the right of possession was taken away. Acts 4:32 to 5:11 explain the situation a bit further. Those who had plenty, did not keep their possessions for themselves, but distributed to the poor according to their needs.

They "sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need" – verse 45. It does not mean that they sold everything they had, but that the brother who had plenty shared his wealth with those who were in need. No one said that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common – 4:32.

The one who had much also gave much to those in need, so that no one in the congregation was suffering want anymore.

This also was the work of the Spirit. He binds the believers together in such a way, that no one calls his possessions his own any more, even though it **is** his own. They served one another with joy.

The belongings to which we by nature cling so much, which no one may touch, are now sold. Who of us will do this? Who will sell one of his properties to help a poor member in the congregation?

We have to acknowledge that the love amongst us is often much colder than it was in the first congregation in Jerusalem.

Has Christ not also taught us that the one who has two garments has to give one to the one who don't have?

The members of the congregation gave themselves with all their possessions completely to each other, serving one another. It is a love and a unity which only the Holy Spirit can work.

Furthermore we see that **every day** they continued to meet together in the temple, daily with one accord – verse 46. Their hunger to hear the Word was so big that no one wanted to stay away from the temple, for there the apostles instructed the multitudes – at least until the persecution broke loose.

But while they still had the opportunity to gather at the temple, they did it daily. All of them together, with one accord, they went up to listen to the instruction of the apostles.

Once again this is the work of the Holy Spirit. By nature we are all blind and deaf to the Word of God and by nature we do not desire to be instructed thereby. But when we are filled with the Spirit, we long to be constantly fed with the Word of God, then we gather all together in the worship services, and at Bible studies, and we are glad when it is time again for family devotions. This also is the work of the Holy Spirit.

We may note also that there was no individualism. Every one did not believe on his own, and in his own manner, serving the Lord his own way. No, those who believed were together, they did everything with one accord, one in the faith, one with each other, one in heart and mind.

If anyone wants to be a Christian all on his own, separated from the congregation, he does not have the Spirit of God.

All of them together with one accord they continued steadfastly in the doctrine of the apostles, and **every day** they all went together to the temple in order that all of them may together be instructed in the doctrine.

And they broke bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God.

Their joy was not generated by outward display or glitter. No, in all simplicity and with humble hearts they lived soberly. While they sold their belongings and had fellowship with the humble, they knew true joy in the Lord.

They were no longer chasing each one after his own honor and his own ambitions, but exercised the communion of saints in all simplicity and with humble love.

It is another wonder that the Spirit worked.

And while they lived in such simplicity praising God, they were also in favor with all the people – verse 47. The people who did not believe, were astonished by what they saw: the unity, the simplicity and sincerity, the joy in the Lord and the love that sacrifices everything for another. A congregation of Christ zealous for good works – **that** is the wonder of Pentecost! Christ is gathering a special people for Himself through His Word and Spirit.

And then we read, the last sentence of verse 47: “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”.

The Lord saves, and those whom He saves, He adds to the church. **He** joins them to the congregation. If the Lord has not joined a man to the congregation, he is not saved. Those whom He saves, He also unites with the congregation. The congregation is Christ’s gathering work and **He** joins us together to be one body.

Does your heart starts burning in you when you hear of such a congregation? Shall we not pray the Lord that He may also fill us with His Spirit and make us such a congregation, zealous for good works? Or is this all part of history?

No, surely this work of the Spirit has not ceased. We did receive the Spirit already when we came to believe the gospel. For no one can believe in Christ if the Spirit of God does not dwell in him. If we believe in Christ, we may be sure that the Spirit of God dwells in us.

And yet, we also have the instruction from God, the command: be filled with the Holy Spirit – Ef.5:18.

We do not have to search for this in all sorts of strange manners, seeking for some strange experiences. We simply have to believe the gospel and repent. The promise is also to us and to our children.

Of ourselves we are not able to do anything good. In ourselves we have no power or life. In ourselves we would remain in sin and death. It is the Spirit of God that gives life. He raises us up unto a new life as He makes us to share in the power of Christ's resurrection.

Do you see what Pentecost means? It is the firstfruits of Christ's death and resurrection. Christ is gathering a congregation for Himself, zealous for good works.

Through Christ we may again call upon God: Father – our Father. The promise is also to us, and to our children. Amen.