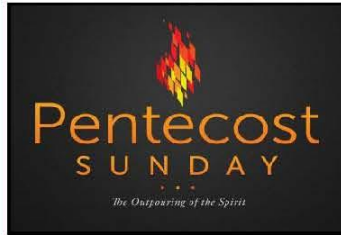


**GROWING**deeper



Pastor Michael O'Neill  
May 24, 2015

**Pentecost**  
***The Outpouring of the Spirit***  
**Acts 2**  
*Acts 1:4-5, 7-9*

**1. The Spirit Poured Out**

- Acts 2:1-4; Genesis 2:7; Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 3:8;  
Genesis 15:17; Exodus 19:18, 3:2, 13:21-22;  
Psalm 104:4; Isaiah 66:15; Numbers 11:29

**2. The Gospel Proclaimed Boldly**

- Acts 2:14-41; 2 Samuel 7:8-16; Psalm 110;  
Deuteronomy 21:23; Joel 2:28-32

**3. The Church Passionately United**

- Acts 2:42-47

love.learn.live.

[westvalleychurch.com](http://westvalleychurch.com)

May 24, 2015  
Michael W. O'Neill  
West Valley Church

**Pentecost**  
***The Outpouring of the Spirit***  
**2015**  
**Acts 2**

At the time that events happen, they can seem quite distinct, but after time passes, we tend to look back and see those individual events as grouped together in a single event. For example, on this Memorial Day weekend, when we consider World War II, we tend to refer to it as if it were a single event. But for sure those who served or lived through that devastating war can probably remember quite distinctly single days and events within that six-year period. Today is Pentecost Sunday – a day whose significance some of us have heard about, and others are unfamiliar. When we think of the significant New Testament events that are now our holy-days, what do we usually think of? Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and maybe Pentecost, if we've been around the church for a while. But all of those events are a part of the single Jesus Event – the way that God came to be with us forever. We see these four things as individual calendar events, but we should also see them as *one* plan of God that completely transformed our relationship with God and his with us. Pentecost is the final episode of the Jesus event. As significant as Christmas and Easter are, without the coming of the Holy Spirit – the event of Pentecost – there would be no book of Acts. The 120 or so believers that had been gathered in that upper room to pray after Jesus ascended into heaven, might have kept waiting in that upper room for as long as they could – maybe a few more weeks, even months off and on. But if the Holy Spirit hadn't been poured out upon them, they eventually would've just returned to their homes confused, hopeless, and disillusioned. But the Holy Spirit *did* arrive and fill them, and because of that, everything – and I do mean everything – changed. Without the Holy Spirit, this sermon wouldn't have happened. Without the Holy Spirit, this church wouldn't exist. Without the Holy Spirit there would be no New Testament to read. The Holy Spirit doesn't overshadow the history-changing arrival of Jesus Christ, but instead solidifies Jesus Christ as Lord. Pentecost is the last essential link in the chain of events that transform everything; the Jesus Event.

On this 1,982<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of that day (give or take a year or two), I'd like us to revisit that event and see what difference it makes in our church today. If we don't get what Pentecost is about, if we don't experience what happened at Pentecost, then this church might as well be a philanthropic club. We are nothing more than maybe a religious Rotary club, or more likely a religious country club. Because without the Holy Spirit, we are group that are all about ourselves who occasionally raise money to help others, but mostly we are just about ourselves.

But we were created to be in a relationship with God and to exist for the sake of others. Your joy and purpose and meaning in life is found as you spend your life for God and for others. The more you spend your life on yourself, the less joy and

purpose and meaning you have. The more you spend it on God and others, the more of those things you will get. And that's a hard thing to do; to stop idolizing ourselves. But the Holy Spirit is the key to making it happen, and he is the key to joy and purpose and meaning. The Holy Spirit unlocks the power to do that. The Holy Spirit is how God imputes, imparts, and implants what Jesus did for us on the cross into our lives.

First of all, I encourage you to read Acts chapters 1 & 2 today sometime. We don't have time to read those two chapters, but it won't take you long to do it. In the meantime, let me summarize it.

Acts is written as part two of the story as it's told by Luke. Luke-Acts is really the entire story. In Luke, we get the story of Jesus; his birth, life, death, and resurrection. In Acts we see Jesus' final days with the disciples after his resurrection and before he ascends into heaven, then we see the Holy Spirit take over from there, and the Christian church is born and grows as God works in amazing ways and as people respond to the Holy Spirit working in the church.

So the story picks up in chapter one, with Jesus giving some last instructions to the disciples. In verses 4&5, it says this about Jesus:

“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 1:4-5, niv)

Then the disciples ask some questions, asking some questions about end-times dates and God's final Kingdom, and Jesus doesn't answer their questions but calls them back to the most important thing as he answers:

“‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.” (Acts 1:7-9, niv)

So the disciples obey and go into the upper room to wait and pray (and take care of a couple of minor organizational housekeeping things).

Now there's one more thing I want you to see in this before we jump in, and that is the significance of why God did this on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost was one of the ancient Jewish springtime festivals or feasts. It had come to commemorate God's giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Do you understand that? That was a key event in the life of the Jewish people – that God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses that would guide the Jewish people. This gift of the law helped people to know God better, but that was nothing compared to what would happen at this Pentecost. Where Pentecost was about the Law, it would now be about the Spirit of Life who gives us the ability to obey the Law.

Pentecost means “fifty” and takes place fifty days after Passover. We know by the Bible that Jesus was with the disciples for forty days after his resurrection. He was

killed on Passover. So simple math tells us that the disciples spent ten days together in prayer and spiritual conversation, waiting for what Jesus had promised them. God had good reason to keep them waiting, because at the end of those ten days, on the day of Pentecost, there would be thousands of people gathered at the Temple from all over the known world. So with all those people in one place, God set off some fireworks.

## 1. The Spirit *Poured Out*

We won't read every verse of chapter two, but I do want to read these first ones:

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:1-4, niv)

Imagine that you are in that room. First, you hear the sound of a rushing wind. We tend to think that's something like a gust of wind, like we have around here that blows down from Ellensburg and across the valley. But that's not it. How many of you have been in a tornado? I know Pastor Jason and Tricia lived in Oklahoma; I imagine they had a few close calls at least. Their home there had a storm shelter built into their garage floor – a hidey hole to escape to if a tornado came. I've never been in one, but I've heard that the wind that accompanies it sounds literally like a freight train going right over you. That is what the original language means when it says they all heard a “rushing wind.” It was so loud that, as we can see later in this chapter, all the thousands of people gathered outside at the Temple heard the noise too.

In both the Hebrew (the language of the Old Testament) and the Greek (the language of the New Testament), there is only one word that means “breath,” “wind,” and “spirit.” So in Genesis we read that God “breathed into” man's nostrils the breath (or spirit) of life. (Genesis 2:7). We see this multiple times throughout the Bible that wind is a symbol for the Holy Spirit (e.g., Ezekiel 37:1-14). Jesus made this connection when he said, “The wind blows wherever it pleases....so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8, niv) So clearly, the sound is to alert them of the Holy Spirit's presence.

But if the disciples were at all confused about what the wind might have meant, God also gave them the symbol of fire. God used the smoking firepot to seal his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:17). God appeared to Moses in a \_\_\_?\_\_\_ burning bush (Exodus 19:18. See also 3:2 and 13:21-22; Psalm 104:4; Isaiah 66:15).

Something else: both Jewish and Greco-Roman writings of author Luke's day associated fire with prophetic inspiration, or being inspired to speak for God. So this is clearly saying that all of them – normal folks, men and women – were inspired to speak for God (see Numbers 11:29!). That will lead to the next thing.

But these two signs were there to leave no doubt at all that this was the presence of God himself. They convey the awesomeness of the presence of God.

But if that wasn't enough, there was a third thing that happened.

We are told that they began to speak in other tongues. Now, you might wonder what that means. Some of you who have been around churches that practice something called "speaking in tongues" will sometimes say the disciples experienced the same thing (speaking in what they call "heavenly languages" – stuff that sort of sounds like gibberish). But that is not what happened here, and to think so is to flunk basic Bible Study. Because it basically says that the disciples thought they were all speaking their own native language, but it was being heard by all the people from all over the world in their own mother tongues.

So miraculously, the 120 believers were anointed to speak the Gospel in a way that the people could hear. But more than that, the unsaved people were anointed to hear the Gospel!

The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples, and here is a key statement, church: the Holy Spirit is given to us – to empower us to tell other people the great news of God's love in ways that they will understand – and through you, he will empower them to hear it.

I want to speak to longtime Nazarenes here, because we are supposed to be all about being sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit. And you were probably told that we are sanctified so that we don't have to struggle with sin anymore. That you should seek and get this filling of the Holy Spirit, and you'll stop sinning, and you will be sanctified, pickled and preserved until heaven. Listen: if you think sanctification is only so that you can stop sinning, you are missing the whole point! God gives us his Spirit and sanctifies us *so that we can be proclaimers of God's love – by loving God and loving people!* There is nowhere in Acts chapters one and two that we are told we will receive the Holy Spirit so we can stop sinning, but we are told that we are filled so that we can receive power to be his witnesses. Now listen to me carefully here, because I'm not saying the issue of sin isn't dealt with at sanctification, because it is. *But holiness is not about the absence of sin, it's about the presence of someone – the God of love who empowers you, yes to not sin, but that's a by-product.* He empowers you to love God and love people. But the problem of sin is not dealt with in this passage! It is elsewhere in the New Testament, but not here.

Something else I want you to see church: there is nothing in the language of this story that says that the reception of the Holy Spirit is an *individual* event. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit comes upon *people*, not individuals. Luke concentrates on the Spirit being poured out on the community of believers. As they prayed together and sought Jesus together, the Spirit was poured out on them, and they had power together to demonstrate the Good News of God's love. Does this sound like something we need, and something we need to do, Church? That is what it means to be the church! And to make the point even further, that leads to...

## 2. The Gospel *Proclaimed Boldly*

Next we see Peter stand up on behalf of the other disciples to preach to the crowd. Keep in mind that as he does this, the other disciples have been doing the same thing to those gathered around them.

In Acts 2:14-41 we get Peter's first sermon, and let me tell you, it's a great one.

I remember my first sermon. I preached it on a trip that the Covenant brothers took to Portland back in 1983. Most of you know that the Covenant was a group of 12 guys being discipled by Dr. Laird, my religion professor and mentor. Anyway, we took a spring break from school and lived on the streets and in the shelters of downtown Portland. And we volunteered at the Portland Peniel Mission. In order to get dinner, the homeless folks had to sit through church first and listen to a sermon, and I got to preach my first one – what I thought was a pretty good sermon.

Here's a picture of me preaching that sermon. It was on Blind Bart – Bartimaeus, the blind homeless guy that Jesus healed in Mark 10. It was a great sermon! It was difficult though because they were cooking dinner in the next room while I preached, so it smelled really good. Anyway, I preached a great sermon! So afterward, as the people are waiting in line for dinner, one of the homeless guys walked up to me, and I was sure he was going to compliment my great sermon. He shook my hand and just looked at me. I couldn't wait for him to tell me how good it was, so I asked him, "What did you think of the sermon?"



He looked at me for several seconds and then said, "You sure talk a long time." I learned a valuable lesson that day: even a great sermon isn't great when it's too long and people are hungry. And my sermon wasn't as great as I thought it was.

But Peter preached a great sermon. We don't have time to read it all, so again, I hope you will read it later today. What's recorded is probably shorter than what Peter actually preached, but we get the main point of it. There are some things I want us to see in this. First, Peter does an amazing job of quoting the Old Testament to prove that Jesus is God (2 Samuel 7:8-16; Psalm 110; Deuteronomy 21:23). But there is something else, too: remember that not two weeks ago, before Jesus ascended; the disciples were asking Jesus about when his Kingdom would be set up? They got it all wrong. But between then and this point, just a week and a half later, Peter got it figured out. He is preaching on the arrival of God's Kingdom, and he's using a very famous passage from the Old Testament prophet, Joel. (Joel 2:28-32). It's a prophecy all about the end times. And Peter is using it to make the statement that the Kingdom of God isn't some far away end of the millennia thing; that it has arrived here and now. This is important folks. Christianity is not about being saved

for heaven someday, so just hold on and don't screw up too badly before you die and you'll get to heaven. Christianity is about the bringing the Kingdom of God here on earth as it is in heaven. We are to live the Kingdom of God, and do our best to bring the Kingdom of God. So we live in peace, we live in love, we don't bad mouth and slander and gossip, we treat people with love and respect, because if the world is going to see that God is real and that there is hope for them today, they've got to see it. It won't do any good to tell them "someday you get to go to heaven!" They want to see the Kingdom now. And that's what Peter and the disciples are preaching, and that's the Gospel we are to proclaim boldly and with confidence. That's why we are given the Holy Spirit! One of my professors who wrote our newest commentary on the book of Acts, Dr. Richard Thompson states this:

*The Spirit didn't come at Pentecost for the sake of the witnesses themselves, but for the sake of their proclamation for others! In Acts, the gift of the Spirit empowers prophetic mission rather than promotes personal piety!*

So the disciples spent time in prayer, seeking Jesus, and the Spirit suddenly filled them all as a community in such a powerful way that they could communicate the Good News of God's Love in ways that others could understand it. The Spirit filled them so that they could carry on the work of Jesus with God's presence right there with and in them. He didn't fill them for their own sakes, but so that they could better follow Jesus and bring the Kingdom of God to earth.

Do you really want to spend your life managing your stuff and being a nice person? Or do you want to be sold out, all out, seeking Jesus and bringing the very heaven of God right here on earth, loving people and showing and sharing God's love with them? Really?! What do you want to your life to count for? Sitting in church? Attending Bible studies? Or seeing transformational miracles happen all around you as you bring the Kingdom of God?

You see, *we don't seek church for our sake; we seek Jesus for the world's sake!* But here's the amazing thing: when we seek Jesus for other's sake, instead of seeking church to be for our sake, THAT'S when we get the church! Finally on this Pentecost Sunday, see...

### **3. The Church *Passionately United***

Luke closes up the account of the day of Pentecost by giving a broad over-view of first-century church life. And here's a clue if you plan to read the rest of Acts (and you should!) – Luke is giving a foreshadowing of later passages that will give greater attention to the gifts that God gave the church and still gives the church today. We plan to talk about some of that in a preaching series in July. But Luke is giving us a picture of what God wants the community of believers to look like. This picture is the church. This is what Jesus died to create, and this is what the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost to empower. So let me read the description, and as I read it, I don't want you to judge your church, as if to say, "So and so doesn't act like that!" I

want you to judge yourself: “Am I acting in those ways toward my brothers and sisters in Christ?” Okay? This is the description:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47, niv).

The church was passionately united. They were devoted! That means wholeheartedly, it was their primary motivation and ambition and goal. Would you be willing to die to protect the unity of your church? Or would you just say, “Oh well. I’ll just go join another church.” They were devoted to Scripture and to their fellowship – the bond that they shared. In other words, their bond toward one another was as valuable to them as the Word of God itself. And why not? Because the other person in their church had the very presence of God the Holy Spirit within them! They shared meals together (some think this means communion, and it could have, but it doesn’t specifically say. So at the very least it means that regularly shared meals with each other). And they were devoted to praying together. How often do you pray together with people in church? I don’t mean that you sit together while Pastor Arden or Casey or James prays. I mean in your home, you pray and your friend prays and you pray some more and your friend prays some more? This doesn’t say they were devoted to doing devotions. This says they were devoted to praying *together* – they loved it and couldn’t wait to do it again.

Guess what that kind of passionate unity produces: such a powerful display of the presence of God among them that outside people couldn’t deny it and couldn’t wait to join them.

Do you want to see God move in power in our church? He’s the same God. We say we believe in the filling of the Holy Spirit. We say we are a church of Jesus Christ. Then let’s pray and seek Christ so that the Spirit might be poured out on our church, filling us so the Gospel could be proclaimed boldly through our lives and language, and let’s be a church that is passionate about our unity.

We are going to sing. And as we sing, I’m going to ask you to come pray at this altar for your church. We are going to pray together what we will pray separately and what we will pray in our small groups. That the Spirit will be poured out, that the Gospel will be lived out and proclaimed boldly by our church, and that we will be passionately united to each other – devoted to each other!

*Sing*

*Pray*