

Pentecost 2016

Once again this morning we are taking a break from our year long series because this happens to be Pentecost Sunday. The Feast of Pentecost was one of the ancient Hebrew festivals celebrating the completion of the grain harvest. Also called the Feast of Weeks because it was held seven weeks after Passover. Eventually it came to be called Pentecost because it was held fifty days after Passover and the Greek word for fiftieth is *Pentakostos*. The rabbis said that seven weeks or fifty days after the Passover was also when God gave the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Consequently the Jews today celebrate Pentecost as the day God gave the Jewish people the law. They call it *Shavuot*.

For Christians we celebrate this day as the birth of the church. It was on this day, ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, that the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples that were gathered in the upper room. From this day on they stopped hiding and began publicly proclaiming the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. They testified that Jesus was the risen Savior, Messiah and Lord. The bible says, **“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4**

Jesus had told them earlier they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. From the Day of Pentecost onward the church was empowered to be the living witness of Christ in the world. They preached, taught, prayed, laid hands on the sick and saw people healed and miracles happened. They discovered and then proclaimed that the message of salvation through Christ was not for Jews only but for Gentiles and for all who would trust in Jesus and believe! From the day of Pentecost on the gospel spread and continues to spread to every continent, to every language and people group. It is the unfinished command of Christ that this gospel be preached to every living person and it is through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit that the church will fulfill Jesus’ command.

Among the Christians of the world, they estimate around 600 million of us would consider ourselves as Pentecostal, i.e. we believe in the present, ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit as it is described in Acts 2

with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues. We believe that the work and manifestation of the Holy Spirit is still empowering the people of God to be his witnesses in the world. By the anointing of the Holy Spirit we are still proclaiming the gospel, without fear, without compromise. Simply put, Pentecostals believe what happened in the book of Acts still happens today.

The events of Acts 2 happened on the day of Pentecost as this Spirit-empowered witness of Christ came to Jerusalem and spread throughout the known world. Jump forward a few centuries to the early 1930's where a group of Pentecostal believers were meeting in Red Fork. They joined with a group of folks that had originally been part of the Carbondale Community Church. The pastor of those folks had encouraged them to seek for the deeper things of God and as a result, some of the members were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Believing that the Red Fork and Carbondale neighborhoods of West Tulsa needed a Pentecostal witness, these two groups joined together in the spring of 1934 and became Carbondale Assembly of God. A rock church was built at West 48th and South 31st West Ave. and a strong congregation was established, preaching the gospel, proclaiming that Jesus was still saving and healing and transforming lives. In 1953 they added a two-story educational building and gave the church a face-lift. It needed a more modern, updated look and that new educational addition allowed the church to more faithfully serve our families and our community, to better train and teach the next generation of believers.

You see, twenty years after the church began the congregation still believed there was a need for a Pentecostal, full gospel witness in this community. They weren't talking about a culturally Pentecostal church, but a theologically and experientially Pentecostal witness, one that was believing and bearing witness to the truth that God by His Holy Spirit is still working through his church in power, still confirming his word with signs and miracles. So, the church upgraded and built and continued to stand as a witness in this community.

In 1967 the church moved to this site with a truly modern design. We were something to see in 67! New people discovered us and began to attend. The church grew. Interestingly the late 60's and early 70's brought the Jesus movement and the Charismatic renewal to Tulsa. Churches of all denominations began to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Denominational barriers fell as God continued to stir the hearts of people, and Carbondale

remained that faithful, stable, Pentecostal witness – a safe place for people of all denominations and backgrounds to come and learn about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

In 1977 we completed a two story educational building along with a gymnasium to better serve the youth and the young families of the church and the community. We wanted to do all we could to reach people, to draw people, to train and encourage people to be faithful followers of Christ. It's the mission of Pentecost, to take the gospel to the whole world through every means possible.

In 1990 we remodeled the sanctuary, expanding seating and giving it a new look. The delivery system and the look changed, but the message of the gospel remained the same. And then came May of 1999! The f5 tornado that destroyed so many homes and lives in Moore, OK made its way down the turnpike and hit our facility. \$3.5 million dollars of damage done in a matter of seconds. After the storm we met for prayer and I posed the question, "Is God finished with us here on the Westside? Maybe we should take the insurance money, give it all to missions and find other churches to attend. Maybe we should find property somewhere else and build. Does God want us to rebuild here?" We prayed and after a few minutes I asked what people thought the Lord was saying. Everyone said, "We don't believe God is finished with this church. He still desires to have a Pentecostal witness in Southwest Tulsa. We are supposed to be here, in this location." We rebuilt here, on this property, debt free.

That was 17 years ago when we prayed and now we are talking about remodeling and building again. Just as an update: We have a time line for the project established by the architects and they are working on the design development phase. The plan is to have hard numbers for us by June 30. In other words, by the end of June we hope to have a better idea of the real cost involved. We have a bank eager to loan us money if needed. If you vote to build, construction could start by this fall.

I believe it's time for a fresh look, for a new appearance. The drawings and design we have calls for a larger lobby area that invites you to sit and have a cup of coffee, to fellowship, to do life together. The plans call for a significant upgrade in technology because we are looking for better ways and methods to share the gospel with people, both inside this facility and to people anywhere in the world through video and the internet. The remodel would give a new look to the front of the facility. It puts a fresh face on an aging sanctuary.

Do we have to do this? I could preach in this sanctuary like it is till my time is done. But I have a responsibility not only to my generation, but to the next generation, to our children and grandchildren, to get this place ready for the next generation to carry on. We need to update and upgrade, because I believe after 82 years God is still saying he wants a Spirit filled, Holy Spirit empowered witness in Southwest Tulsa! This church still matters in this city and community.

But hear me again. We can have the most inviting lobby, serve the best coffee in town, and have a sanctuary with the latest and greatest technology and environmental worship, we can create the perfect images on the wall, but if we don't have the life giving Spirit of Christ within us none of that will make a bit of difference. We must have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We need a fresh Pentecost, a fresh empowerment of the Holy Spirit. What does a fresh Pentecost look like? Based on what we read in the books of Acts about this newly birthed, Spirit-filled group of believers, let me suggest a couple of things. First of all,

A fresh Pentecost must be cross-cultural. Acts 2 says the crowd that assembled on the day of Pentecost consisted of Jews "from every nation under heaven." Cross-cultural. By the tenth chapter of Acts the gospel message and the evidence of Pentecost had spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, crossing racial and ethnic lines. From Jewish rabbis and leaders to Roman centurions and soldiers, from Greek citizens to slaves and slave owners, business people and beggars, the gospel found its' way into the hearts of people, crossing every imaginable barrier.

The Spirit empowered church of 2016 has to be cross-cultural. When Peter preached to the crowd that gathered on that first Pentecost, he said this promise of the Holy Spirit and power was to be poured out on all people (Acts 2:17-18). This was for old and young, for sons and daughters, men and women. Peter proved it when he preached at the house of Cornelius, a Gentile and they were saved and filled with the Spirit. This gospel is for everyone. Join us on Sunday morning. Come on Wednesday night and eat dinner with us and watch as the people of God gather. I think it looks like Pentecost because Pentecost is cross cultural. God help us in the power of the Holy Spirit to reach across boundaries and barriers and share with one another the love of Christ.

A fresh Pentecost has to be missional. Pentecost has always been about taking the message of good news to the whole world, to every culture, to every language and nation and people. Across the street, across town or across the world, that is our mission. Jesus said "**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.” Acts 1:8 That’s our calling. Pentecost and Pentecostal blessings and manifestations like the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues, that isn’t just for our edification, it’s about spiritual empowerment so we can effectively reach the whole world with the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ! Whatever we build, if we build, whatever technology is added, whatever new look is given to the building, behind it all must be this passion to reach people with the life changing message of Christ! We’ve tried to be faithful to that mission for 82 years – going and sending and giving so that others can know Jesus and his saving grace.

A fresh Pentecost will be relational. In addition to carrying the gospel to the whole world, one of the immediate effects of Pentecost seemed to be the uniting of the people in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit draws us together around Jesus and the cross. Despite our differences, we are family.

After Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, the bible says about 3,000 people were baptized and added to their number that day. The bible then says, **“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he 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.” Acts 2:42-47**

I don’t believe God was saying we all should move onto a big compound somewhere. Although we could try the first Pentecostal *kibbutz* in Tulsa. The point is not the method we use, it’s the principle behind it. One of the signs of a Spirit empowered Pentecostal church should be how they love and care for one another. We talk about doing life together. That’s what the first church was doing in Acts 2. It’s what we endeavor to do here.

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit in John 14:16 as the Comforter. Some translate that word as *Paracletos* meaning “one called alongside to help, to encourage, to comfort”. That’s part of what the Holy Spirit does and consequently that is part of what a Spirit empowered Pentecostal church and Christian is called to do. We are to come alongside one another to encourage, to comfort, to strengthen, to help. A fresh Pentecost leads to a church ready to love one another.

A fresh Pentecost means to be a living witness to a Risen Christ. On the day of Pentecost, when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, they all began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Part of what Pentecost is all about is Spirit-empowered speech, but not just speaking in other tongues. Acts 2 tells us after Peter was baptized in the Holy Spirit he then stood up and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, began to speak to the crowd that assembled in a language he knew. He boldly told them the Jesus they had crucified was both Lord and Christ, that God had raised him from the dead, that they were eye witnesses to that fact and that he had now been exalted to the right hand of God the Father. He told them to repent and believe upon Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and they too would be filled with the Holy Spirit. They would then become living witnesses of a Risen Christ. What does that mean?

A living witness speaks prophetically. Peter called the people to repentance and warned them about the corruptness of the age. A spirit empowered church needs to speak God's truth in the face of a deceived and deceiving culture. We are called to speak the truth of the gospel and fear no man or government. The prophet Micah asked, "**And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**" **Micah 6:8** A Spirit-empowered Pentecostal church must have a voice that calls us and our community to act justly, to defend the poor and the weakest among us, to act with mercy toward others and to walk humbly with our God.

A living witness acts obediently. Jesus said, "**If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.**" **Luke 9:23** Jesus said we would receive power to be his witnesses. That doesn't simply mean he gives us the power to tell people about Jesus, to witness and evangelize, it means he gives us power to live as his witness. It means he empowers us to deny ourselves and live for him. It means he grants us grace daily to follow the Lord and live in obedience, regardless of the personal sacrifice or cost. It means power to live a holy life, pleasing to Christ and obedient to His word. Pentecost isn't simply about speaking in tongues or spiritual gifts, it is about Spirit empowered living of a life fully surrendered to Jesus Christ. Finally,

A living witness walks in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. There is no getting around the fact that Jesus said "**You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.**" Pentecost means spiritual empowerment. Empowered by the Holy Spirit to live, to

obey, to go, to serve, to pray, to challenge, to encourage, to share, to sacrifice, to choose, to lay down our life.

A fresh Pentecost means spiritual empowerment to go into dark places and bring the light of the gospel, to bring hope to the hopeless, whether that is in Tulsa or on the other side of the world. The reason we can and will do that is because we believe the Holy Spirit is still at work today just as he was in the New Testament church. We still believe God does the miraculous. We still believe the Holy Spirit speaks and works through his church to bring hope. That's why we dare to go into all the world, because the presence and power of the Holy Spirit goes with us. We face each day believing the miracle working power of the Holy Spirit is at work within us enabling us to do all God calls us to do.

Acts 2 says, **“Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.” Acts 2:43** But it wasn't just the apostles, for Jesus said, “these signs will accompany those who believe...” Mark 16:17.

The Holy Spirit is still doing signs and wonders through his church. This world, this community, this generation, still needs a Spirit empowered, Pentecostal, signs and wonders church. There is still a need for us to be here. It may be time for us to build again, to remodel again, to upgrade again, but if we are going to meet the needs of our world and our community, more than ever we need the Pentecostal power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. We may need a fresh look to our building, but I know for sure we need a fresh Pentecost! We need a fresh prophetic and Pentecostal witness. We need to live in and operate in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Let's ask for a fresh Pentecostal outpouring and anointing upon our lives and upon our church!