

Today, according to the church calendar, is Pentecost Sunday. Over the last few weeks we've talked about Jesus final days on earth – the lessons he might have taught them about the kingdom of God during those 40 days following his resurrection, and then last week on Ascension Sunday we heard about his ascension to the right hand of the Father. For our timeline then Pentecost took place 10 days after Jesus' ascension to heaven. We read in Acts 1 that, **“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** Further instructions were given in verse 8, **“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**

As a result of these instructions once Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples **“returned to Jerusalem from the hill called Mount of Olives.” Acts 1:12** Over the next 10 days they conducted business, they chose a new disciple to replace Judas, and they met to pray. Waiting for whatever it was that Jesus had told them would come. That waiting ends at the beginning of Acts 2.

I've titled this sermon The Relational Aspect of Pentecost. I'm convinced that Jesus does everything in and through relationship. The trinity itself is a beautiful picture of relationship – the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. They make up one God, but are also in relationship with each other as Father and Son and also work together in unity. Jesus comes to bring us into right relationship with God. **“God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1**

Corinthians 1:9 And, we get this beautiful picture of the personal relationship that God longs to have with us through the events that happened on this day in history. **“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

The first aspect of relationship is revealed through the wind and the fire.

The Prophet Ezekiel had a unique vision where he saw a valley of dry bones and then watched as the Lord made the wind to blow breath or spirit into them. God tells Ezekiel, “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.” It was prophetic of the same type of Spirit outpouring that the Prophet Joel speaks of and Peter will quote in just a minute. The wind that blows through that upper room seems to be more than just a coincidence with nature. **It seems that God was breathing new life, His very spirit into the individual hearts of these disciples and followers.**

The tongues of fire that come also have a connection to the way that God’s presence was seen and known in days past. When the children of Israel left Egypt way back in the book of Exodus they had no idea where they were going. **“By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.**

Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.” Exodus 13:21-22 The fire was proof of God’s presence

dwelling among His people. It was seen by all in the community – it led them and guided them. God’s presence was communal resting over His people. God’s presence was seen in that pillar of fire for 40 years, it rested over the tent of meeting. King Solomon built a temple where God’s presence could dwell. Solomon dedicates the temple saying, **“The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” 2 Chronicles 6:18** Yet, this temple bore

His Name and was a place where the people could come and pray and God would hear from heaven. **“When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.” 2 Chronicles 7:1** The fire was a sign of God’s presence, and always the people went to where God’s presence was – a tent, a tabernacle, a temple, or the Most Holy Place where the sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins were offered. However, at the time of Jesus death the curtain that separated the Most Holy Place had been torn so where did God’s presence now dwell? Now, on the day of

Pentecost, fire comes once again – that sign of God’s presence and authority – comes to them, but not just in one giant pillar, no, the fire splits and comes to rest over each individual. Fire falls and with it I believe came the glory of God. The presence of God now dwelt in each person. **There is a personal connection, a relational aspect to Pentecost that says no longer is this about just the group as a whole – it’s also about the individual.** You are now, as Paul would write later, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told them He would send the Holy Spirit in John 14 and that they would know Him “for he lives with you and will be in you.” The presence of the living God was now resting on each person in that room – giving new life and filling each one with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist had said **“I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Luke 3:16**

This was that baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire! God’s spirit continues to rest in places like this church building, but from the day of Pentecost we have this visual sign that it also dwells in men and women. That wherever 2 or 3 are gathered there the Lord will be also. This is huge, this is personal, this is relational.

We see this relational aspect of Pentecost continue as the spirit comes upon them and they somehow are seen and heard by those staying in Jerusalem.

“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.” Acts 2:5-13

The lands of Parthia, Media, Elam, and Mesopotamia are those areas where the Jews had been taken into captivity 700-800 years prior by the Assyrian army. When Ezra and then Nehemiah brought the exiles back some chose to stay which is why at this time in the book of Acts there we still tens if not hundreds of thousands of Jews living in that area most of whom would speak Aramaic. The rest of that list of countries gives a roll call of the countries of the known world where Jews had gone to settle. As they hear this group of 120 believers full of the Holy Spirit praising God they begin to realize that they recognize these languages. Wait, that's my home language! And, Galileans are speaking it! That's weird! This isn't just Aramaic or Greek or one of the other major languages of the day – this was their own language. The significance here is again one of relationship – God so loved the world – and here represented in Jerusalem are Jewish people from nearly every part of the known world. Additionally, it speaks to the fact that God's promises were for all the people not just those who had returned after the exile, not just those who were living in Jerusalem, not just those who had been keeping the law – no one is forgotten here. God wants all the people to hear the good news of Jesus. **God wants all the people to be brought into a right relationship with Him.** God's desire was that all His people would **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” Acts 2:38**

The Day of Pentecost reveals to us once again the relational heart of God, which has always been for all the people. He makes a way for His people to hear about Jesus in their own tongue so that they fully understand this Good News. John in His vision in Revelation sees Jesus who is worthy to open the scroll because “you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.” Revelation 5:9 This mission to be a witness of all that Jesus has done to the ends of the earth begins on the day of Pentecost as the people from every nation under heaven hear this good news.

The relational aspect of Pentecost is also seen in the language used by Peter as he stands before the crowd.

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Acts 2:14-21

Relational words are used as Peter explains that it’s not just Good News of Jesus that you’re hearing in your native tongue, this is also the beginning of the fulfillment of a prophetic word by the prophet Joel to pour out God’s spirit on sons, and daughters, young and old. **The relational aspect of Pentecost is that God longs to pour out His spirit on all people.** Jesus told the disciples in John 14 that He wouldn’t leave them as orphans – that He would come to them with the Holy Spirit. You aren’t orphans if you know Jesus – you’ve been adopted into his family as sons and daughters – and it’s on sons and daughters that God will pour out His Spirit in the last days. These last days began on the day of Pentecost and they’re still continuing until the day Jesus returns for His bride. We’re still living in the days when God is pouring out His spirit on us! Sons! Daughters! We’re included! Men! Women! Teenagers! Retirees!

For a generation of fatherless children – this is good news. Your sons will prophecy! For a generation of women who feel less than – you prophecy like a girl – you’re right – this outpouring of the spirit is for His daughter’s as well.

For those who feel looked down upon because they’re young and what can they contribute – your young people will see visions.

For those who were starting to feel like their day had passed and they had nothing left to give – your old will dream dreams.

This was for men, and women, young and old – no one gets left out when God pours out His Spirit on ALL flesh! **This is real relationship when the Father God pours out the Holy Spirit on his Sons and Daughters so that they can preach Jesus.**

And that brings me to 3 things that this relationship seen on the Day of Pentecost brings:

1. Joy!

Several years ago, I had taken a team of students from Central Bible College to Berlin, Germany, to do a children's musical/drama that presented the Gospel of Jesus so beautifully. As college students do – there was a lot of joking and ridiculousness on that trip. We were staying at a hostel and one night we got back rather late, but no one was quite ready to go to their rooms. Everyone was talking loudly – a sure sign of Americans – and laughing hysterically. The professor from the school and me were sitting on the steps and a few men that were also staying there had come out and were observing the students. They asked where we were from and what we were doing and then commented on the students laughing and wondered aloud what bar we'd been to and what we'd been drinking. The professor and I looked at each other with this look that said are you thinking what I'm thinking! It's the book of Acts. These students aren't drunk as you suppose! It was the craziest moment as we began to share that they'd had nothing to drink they just enjoyed being together and this joy came from Jesus. We had a whole moment with these men.

Relationship with God and the Holy Spirit living in us brings joy that the world cannot comprehend. Peter will go on to say that **“You will fill me with joy in your presence.” Acts 2:28** Paul said the kingdom of God is a matter of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. There's a great song that says, “This joy I have – the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away.” That's the joy that comes only from the Holy Spirit. Why can you be smiling in the midst of pain or struggle? It's the joy of the Holy Spirit! At the start of chapter 2 they're hiding out in an upper room wondering if they're next on the execution list – then the Holy Spirit comes and they're tumbling out of that room like crazy people full of joy and standing up to preach to thousands! Did the situation change? No, but the Holy Spirit changed

something in them and brought joy into the circumstance. People in Acts 4 will “take note that these men had been with Jesus.” That’s joy that people see!

2. Power!

The relationship brought power. Peter is suddenly emboldened to stand and preach the good news because the Holy Spirit brings power. Jesus told them they would receive power – and they did. **The power to preach and proclaim the good news came as a direct result of the new relationship and infilling of the Holy Spirit.** Peter hasn’t preached a sermon before now – he’s said some crazy things, but never has he had the nerve to proclaim Jesus in this way prior to the Holy Spirit. We think – well, I can’t talk about Jesus to my co-worker – not without the help of the Holy Spirit – but he gives us the power and the ability. We see this in a new, relational way on the day of Pentecost.

3. Jesus!

Finally, **This new relationship on the Day of Pentecost brought a greater understanding and emphasis on Jesus.** The Holy Spirit’s greatest role is to glorify Jesus and we see that from the very beginning. Peter stands up and begins to tell the people – not about the wind or the fire, though he explains what they’ve witnessed, but Peter’s whole goal is to preach Jesus.

Jesus:

- **Accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs (2:22)**
- **Put to death by nailing him to a cross (2:23)**
- **Raised from death by God (2:24)**
- **Was not abandoned to the grave (2:27)**
- **Was the one spoken of by King David (2:31)**
- **Exalted to the right hand of God (2:33)**
- **Has received from God and poured out the promised Holy Spirit (2:33)**
- **Greater than King David and sits on the throne (2:34)**
- **He is now both Lord and Christ (2:36)**
- **Offers forgiveness of sins (2:38)**

It's all about Jesus and relationship with him and the Day of Pentecost speaks of that in an amazing way. Peter didn't need to stand and give 17 ways to a better, greater, happier life – He just stood and preached Jesus – crucified, risen, ascended – and 3,000 people experienced the changed life that salvation brings.

Today we read and remember that first day of Pentecost, but for someone here June 4, 2017, might be your Day of Pentecost. Today is the day for you to move into relationship with Jesus. Peter told the people gathered then, that **“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:39** That's you – that's me. We were far off and hadn't even been thought of except in the mind and heart of God, but the promise of forgiveness, the promise of His Holy Spirit that would take up residence in our lives and bring joy and power and teach us about Jesus – that promise was for us. God is calling us today to respond. This can be your Day of Pentecost – a day when you come into right relationship with Jesus who died for you. This can be your Day of Pentecost where you experience the Holy Spirit in a greater way through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This can be your Day of Pentecost as you realize the joy and power that comes in a greater way.

The relational aspect of Pentecost is for you – allow the Holy Spirit to take up residence in you and bring you into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and then experience all that that relationship can bring – joy, power, and a deeper and deeper, every day, growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Pray