

Pentecost

Psalm 25:1-15 (NIV) ¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; ²in you I trust, O my God. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. ³No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame, but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without excuse. ⁴Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; ⁵guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. ⁶Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD. ⁸Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. ⁹He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. ¹⁰All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant. ¹¹For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great. ¹²Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. ¹³He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. ¹⁴The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. ¹⁵My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.

Numbers 11:24-30 (NIV) ²⁴So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent. ²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again. ²⁶However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." ²⁸Joshua son

of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" ²⁹But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" ³⁰Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

John 7:37-39 (NIV) ³⁷On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." ³⁹By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Acts 2:1-21 (NIV) ¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." ¹⁴Then

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. ¹⁵These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷"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. ¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

The Power of Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21

Acts 1:8 *"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."* (NIV)

Intro Plugged in to God's power (Ephesians 1:18)

- ❑ **The power of Pentecost is unity** (verse 1; Acts 1:14; 4:32; 17:6; John 17:22-23; Romans 15:5-6)

- ❑ **The power of Pentecost is the Holy Spirit** (verses 2-5, 11, 17-18; 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 10:38; John 14:12, 16; Romans 15:13)

- ❑ **The power of Pentecost is the gospel** (verses 5-11, 21; Romans 1:16; Acts 2:36-41; 1 Corinthians 1:18)

Next Week: The Holy Trinity

Psalm 8

Lesson: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Epistle: Acts 2:14a, 22-36

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

The Power of Pentecost

The power available to us: We live in an age of power available to us that could scarcely be imagined 160 years ago when the first oil well was drilled in Pennsylvania. From cars and trucks, to factories to consumer electronics, our world is dependent on its sources of energy.

If you've ever experienced a power failure, like *our* family did for five days, after the Inaugural day windstorm here in 1993, then you realize how dependent we are on the energy that is connected to our homes.

But that power surging through our sockets is useless unless you actually plug something in.

Anyone who has worked in tech support knows that one of the most basic fixes, is to make sure the computer or printer or router, is actually plugged in.

If you feel you are experiencing a personal power failure, then check to see if you are plugged into the source of unlimited power.

In Ephesians 1:18, 20, the Apostle Paul is acting like a spiritual tech support when he writes: *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know . . . [God's] incomparably great power for us who believe. . . .* (NIV)

I think, as our reliance on *natural* energy sources has grown, our reliance on God's supernatural power has diminished.

On the Jewish feast of Pentecost (about AD 33) the power of God was poured out on a small group of disciples that jump-started a movement that continues to this day and has changed the world.

What happened at Pentecost nearly 2000 years ago was the fulfillment of Jesus promise in

Acts 1:8: "*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.*" (NIV)

This morning I want each of us to be plugged into that source of unlimited power.

Let's begin with prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to rely on you, and your *incomparably great power*, to trust you, to be your witnesses and serve you, and to live godly lives. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

I've titled this message, the **Power of Pentecost**, and I want to share three ways the disciples of Jesus experienced God's power at Pentecost that is still available to you and I today. First,

❑ **The power of Pentecost is unity** (verse 1; Acts 1:14; 4:32; 17:6; John 17:22-23; Romans 15:5-6)

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

They were all together. Not just physically in one location; they were united in purpose.

Jesus had told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem. I think it is significant that they didn't just go their separate ways (and binge-watch Netflix or the equivalent of that day). We are told in Acts 1:14 that for more than a week, the apostles, along with *the women, and Jesus' mother and brothers, and other disciples, about 120 people, gathered together.*

We are told, *¹⁴these all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer.* (NASB)

The Greek word used here for *one mind* means oneness of mind and heart. It means to be one in spirit and purpose.

--Practical Word Studies in The New Testament.

They weren't just together in one place physically, they were united spiritually in prayer; united in purpose—obeying the command of Jesus to wait. They were waiting for the Lord to show up in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the unity that Jesus prayed for in

John 17:22-23 *I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.* (NIV)

For the Jewish feast of Pentecost, God brought people to Jerusalem from all over the Roman empire to hear the message of salvation through these followers of Jesus who had *complete unity*.

It was the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer: *May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

It is through our unity in Jesus Christ that the world will know the love and salvation God wants for every person.

There is power in unity.

I'm a pretty intense bicycle rider. I used to ride with a group of even more intense riders on a route along the Illinois river before I moved back to Washington. By riding in what's called a paceline—single file and close together—you reduce wind resistance and drag to become more aerodynamic. Your efficiency is increased by as much as 20%; which means you can go 20% faster or use a fifth less energy to go the same speed. I found it exhilarating, working in unity, to cruise along flat stretches at 27 miles-an-hour. We could go farther and faster riding together in unity.

The professional cyclists in the Tour de France achieve speeds of 35 miles-an-hour riding in unity as 9-man teams.

If you've ever been on a winning sports team, or a successful leadership team, then you know the power of unity.

Romans 15:5-6 contains this prayer for us: *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (NIV)

Acts 4:32 describes the first church in this way: *All the believers were one in heart and mind. . . .* (NIV)

It was a power so great that one pagan critic said that they have turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Actually, from a Christian point of view they turned the world right-side up.

Our unity is challenged right now as we are forced to be separated in our home confinement. But we can still be united in prayer and purpose and somewhat in fellowship through the technology available to us.

Second,

- ❑ **The power of Pentecost is the Holy Spirit** (verses 2-5, 11, 17-18; 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 10:38; John 14:12, 16; Romans 15:13)

In verses 2-4 we are told: ²*Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

If you've ever heard the blowing of a violent wind, then you know the kind of power that this is talking about.

In Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek—the languages of the Bible—the word for Spirit is the same word used for breath and wind. And so, the Bible often uses the word picture of wind to describe the work Holy Spirit.

For instance, 2 Peter 1:21 describes how God inspired the writing of the Bible:

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (ESV)

That word for *carried along* in the Greek language is used to describe the wind filling the sails of a ship and propelling it through the water.

To go back to a bicycle illustration. I once was riding by myself on a very windy day. The wind was so fierce that I actually had to pedal to ride downhill. On one stretch of flat road, I was able to go 42 miles-an-hour with the wind directly at my back, carrying me along.

The Holy Spirit carries us along to do what would be impossible on our own, to achieve *God's* purpose in our lives. We are told in verse 4 that *all* the apostles were enabled—empowered—by the Holy Spirit to speak in other languages, *declaring the wonders of God* (verse 11).

Again, this fulfilled what Jesus said in Acts 1:8 “. . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . .” (NIV)

We can only be witnesses for Christ, or serve Him, or even live a Christian life, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 10:38 we are told *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. . .* (ESV)

Jesus told his disciples that this same power would be available to them, and to us, through the Holy Spirit. (John 14:12, 16)

The Christian life is lived only in the power of the Holy Spirit. For instance, in Romans 15:13 the apostle Paul prays: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.* (ESV)

Third,

□ **The power of Pentecost is the gospel**

(verses 5-11, 21; Romans 1:16; Acts 2:36-41; 1 Corinthians 1:18)

¹¹*we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!*

The last verse of our Scripture lesson today said:

²¹*And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

The gospel was being declared for salvation.

Peter ends his Pentecost sermon in this way, as recorded in Acts 2:36-41: ³⁶*Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."* ³⁷*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"* ³⁸*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* ³⁹*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."* ⁴⁰*With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded*

with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (NIV)

That is the power of the gospel.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:16 *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (NIV)*

Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18: *For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (NASB)*

One of the most amazing demonstrations of the power of the gospel occurred during my last few years of ministry at my former congregation. A woman, whom I'll call Sally, had been an acquaintance of mine for more than a decade, and had never shown any interest in spiritual things. In fact, as I found out later, Sally considered herself an atheist and was bitter toward Christianity.

One day, during a conversation, I offhandedly invited her to our church. It's quite a story about why she even accepted the invitation and came—but suffice it to say, God was at work in Sally's life, and the timing and circumstances was perfect. Sally came to our church, heard the gospel, and her life was radically changed.

The transformation was evident to her friends. One told her, "whatever new medication the doctor has put you on, it's really working!" To which Sally replied, "It's not a drug, it's Jesus!"

God took away her alcoholism and healed a long and painful rift between her and some of her siblings. She had an insatiable hunger for God's word

and delighted in Christian fellowship. Her whole world was turned right-side up.

That is the power of the gospel. It is as valid today, just as it was 2,000 years ago at Pentecost.

Now while the specific manifestation of the power of God at Pentecost was a one-time event; that same power displayed then, is available to us today.

It is the power of our unity in Jesus Christ;

It is the power of the Holy Spirit, and

It is the power of the Gospel.

The Gospel is still changing lives as it is proclaimed throughout the world.

It has the power to change our lives as well.

We cannot live out the Christian life in our own strength. We cannot accomplish God's mission and ministry by our own power. The way the church experienced the power of God at Pentecost, is the same way we can be empowered today.

Let us pray

Benediction:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV)