

# THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Sermon 862

The Day of Pentecost

June 8, 2014

949th Week as Priest

775th Week at St Dunstan's

40th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

*Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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The Known World at the time of the Apostles was a much smaller place than it is today. Remember that in the first century AD, the world was flat, and it consisted largely of the lands immediately surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, so named because it was the Sea in the Middle (medi) of the Earth (terra).

Thus, when the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem on that Day of Pentecost, they were in the company of devout Jews from “every nation under heaven,” about

twenty countries that surrounded the Sea in the Middle of the Flat Earth.

Beyond the known world was the edge of the world, beyond the four corners of the earth, and a ship sailing too far would simply fall off the edge of the world into chaos. So you can see that in the first century AD, the missionary journeys of Paul and Silas and Timothy and Barnabas and John Mark were extraordinary and dangerous indeed.

Few but the Romans, Greeks, and Phoenicians had traveled to the four corners of the earth, and Britain to the West, and India to the East, were not only at the end of the world, they were also at the edges of knowledge.

This first century AD was truly a time of discovery, and the principal explorers were the Apostles and followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Just 50 days before, he had been arrested, condemned, and crucified as a common criminal. His crime, they said, was blasphemy, for he claimed to be the King of the Jews, the Messiah, the long-awaited one who would deliver his people from the tyranny of Rome.

Mysteriously, suddenly, this Jesus whom they killed was raised from death and appeared many times in the Great Fifty Days to his friends and followers. He ate with them, and walked and talked with them, and he opened the Scriptures to them, showing that he was truly the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets, the Torah and the Psalms—that he was indeed the Son of the Most High, and that he and the Father were one.

At the 40th day, he explained that he had to leave, but that he would send the Comforter, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. And he ascended into heaven, right before their eyes. Still, they were dumbfounded and unable to understand the full extent of his message. But they did as he said; they waited in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit.

It was another of those remarkable “fullness of time” moments when they gathered together in the house, and there was suddenly a mighty wind, and tongues of fire rested on each of the Apostles.

Then they began to speak, not in glossolalia, the secret language of tongues, but in the native languages of all the known world. They were not speaking nonsense, and they were by no means drunk with new wine. (After all,

explained Peter, it was only nine o'clock in the morning!) No, they were telling of the mighty works of God.

And that day, the Known World was forever changed. And the disciples, now called the Apostles, were forever changed. No longer fearful, cowardly, and ignorant, they were now filled with the Holy Spirit, and they received the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit promised of old in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. At that moment, they were given wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, strength, faith, and holy fear.

At that “fullness of time” moment, they discovered their direction, and purpose, and calling in Christ. These were changed men, and each one was a new creation in Christ. Behold, the old had passed away, the new had come—and all this was a gift from God.

It was the same God who had always been the strength and the comfort of his People—from the beginning of Creation when the Spirit moved across the face of the waters as a mighty wind; to the Call of Abram and Sarai to make the journey of a lifetime—to the making of an eternal Covenant with his People as they made their way to the Promised Land; to the giving of the Law at Sinai,

which was more than rule and statute, but was the Spirit of righteousness.

It was the same God that day of Pentecost, who fulfilled the promises of Scripture in the sacrifice of his only Son. And now his people stood in the presence of the Holy Spirit of God and were transformed by that power and those tongues of fire, what the Church Fathers would come to call the “energies of God.”

Their lives would now show forth a new spirit, and their message of the good news of Jesus Christ and the arrival of the Kingdom of God would spread like fire to the four corners of the earth. Their lives were changed forever by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Now they would show forth the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control.

Nothing could stop them now. Theirs was a time of discovery, and they had discovered their direction and purpose and calling in Christ. Each one of them—Simon Peter, James and John, Paul, Thomas— and the rest would become selfless and courageous in the days and weeks and years ahead. No longer would they hide for fear of anyone. They would preach and proclaim Jesus as

Lord and themselves as his servants, and almost every one of them was martyred for the faith.

The world as we know it is a much larger and more complex reality than in their day. This fragile earth, our island home, is one planet in a small solar system among millions. We have explored vast reaches of space and walked on our own moon. We hold the power to destroy ourselves, but we cannot save ourselves.

The human race is healthier, stronger, and better educated than it has ever been—and yet people throughout the third world are plagued by disease, starvation, and oppression. We live in the wealthiest, strongest nation on earth, and yet we are beset by terrorism, war, and natural disasters.

The simple truth is that people are as hungry for the Good News of Jesus Christ as we have ever been. We need direction and purpose and a calling to a new life in Christ. We, as a people, are rich in things, but poor in spirit. And there are millions more out there in the great wide world who know nothing of the love of Jesus, or of the abundant life which is ours in Christ.

We live once again at the fullness of time. Like the Apostles of 35 AD, we are being called to new life in the Spirit, a life that is characterized by love and forgiveness and reconciliation—and we are called to live this life in such a way that we bring others to the knowledge and love of the Lord.

May Almighty God, who enlightened the minds of the disciples by pouring upon them the Holy Spirit, make us rich with his blessing, that we may abound more and more in that Spirit for ever. Amen.

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