

REMEMBER THE DAY OF PENTECOST ~ ACTS 2:1-21

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¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia 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!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, 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. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'



Grace, mercy and peace are yours, through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Have you ever asked or been asked the question, "do you have a photographic memory?" We might ask that if an individual has a knack for recalling random trivia and events. And there are a select few number of people that do have a photographic memory. They can remember what happened on every day of their life, which they've said at times can be a curse. But if you're like most people, you may not remember every day of your life, but there are certain days, certain events that are indelibly carved into your memory. Events like weddings, events like graduations, events like births and deaths.

Seventy years ago this last Friday was an event that was indelibly etched into the minds of many. That day was June 6, 1944, or more famously known as D-Day. It was when 150,000 Allied troops stormed the Nazi-controlled beaches at Normandy. This invasion was the turning point of World War II, it gave the Allied forces a foothold on the European continent. General Dwight Eisenhower was the commander of the whole operation. He said making the call to go forward with the invasion was the most difficult decision he ever made as general. No doubt he forever remembered the events of D-Day, as

did the men who fought, and the men, women and children who lived through it, similar to 9/11 in our day.

Maybe you can remember a day like that in vivid detail. I can imagine one of those days for the first disciples of Jesus was Pentecost. Certainly they would have remembered the resurrection and the ascension as well, but Pentecost was right up there too. And it should be for us as well. It may not carry the same importance as Christmas and Easter for many Christians, but may it carry a similar importance for you and I, not only today, but throughout the year. REMEMBER THE DAY OF PENTECOST

1. A day of gathering in
2. A day of pouring out

(1)

When the Israelites were wandering in the desert after leaving Egypt, God gave to them a number of laws to follow and feasts to remember him. During the course of a year, the Israelites were to celebrate three festivals, these were the three high points of the Jewish year. One of these festivals remembered when the Israelites left Egypt, they remember this as the Passover. Fifty days later they celebrated another time with the first-fruits of the harvest, when they thank God for the harvest, and trust he will continue provide a good harvest, they remember this as the Feast of Weeks. The final annual festival for the Israelites came at the end of the harvest a couple of months later and it was called the Feast of In-gathering, when they would gather in the rest of the harvest.

And it is at this second great feast, when Jerusalem would be filled with Jews and converts to Judaism to celebrate. But this wasn't what made that particular Feast of Weeks memorable. It was also the day God the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and created a stir. Luke describes it this way, **"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."** There was no wind, only the sound of one, there was no need to call the fire department, for it only looked like fire. We need not look for further explanation of how this happened, just that it did.

The purpose of this "disturbance" is made clear by God's Word. It wasn't just some little fire-cracker that just went off. It wasn't something that was done in a corner that no one knew about it. It was done publically, it was done loudly, it was done to draw attention that something special was happening here. REMEMBER THE DAY OF PENTECOST – A day of gathering in. The Holy Spirit gathered in believers from all around the known world to Jerusalem, and now he was gathering them in to see what he had done.

And when they gathered in, what did they see? They saw tongues of flame dancing above the disciples' heads, and not only that, they heard something they could understand. We turn again to Luke's description, **"When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own languages...[they heard them] declaring the wonders of God in [their] own tongues."** We hardly need to guess at what wonders of God the disciples were sharing with anyone who would listen. They had been prepared by Jesus for this very purpose. They would have pointed to the Old Testament Scriptures and all God had done for the people of Israel. They would have

pointed to Jesus and how he fulfilled all of these Scriptures. They would have pointed to his ascension as the culmination of his life on this earth. These are the wonders of God!

Many were amazed and perplexed, while others refused to believe the witness in front of their very eyes, they claimed the disciples were drunk. They said, “**they’ve had too much wine,**” even though this happened early in the morning. This whole event gives evidence to God gathering his people in. This is reason enough to REMEMBER THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

It is a day we should remember too. A day where God fulfilled his promise to his first disciples, to send the Holy Spirit. A time when just as the Israelites were gathering in the first-fruits of their grain harvest, the Lord was gathering in more souls into his kingdom. We hear later in this chapter of Acts that 3,000 of them were baptized on that day – they were convicted by God’s Law and were comforted by his free Gospel. And since that time God has been gathering in more and more people, right up until the present day.

Sometimes we picture this gathering in like God is picking his team, much like school kids pick teams at recess. Except at recess, there’s kids who don’t want to play the game and they don’t get picked, they are on neither team. That’s where that analogy falls short. Because it wasn’t that we were standing on some neutral ground when God chose us, but we were in fact on the other team, because we chose to be there. We wanted nothing to do with being on God’s team, we strived against God’s team. These are the kind of people God chose, these are the kind of people God gathered in. These are the kind of people you were.

Time and time again in the Old and New Testaments, this same theme is repeated: “**Your sins have separated you from your God.**” All of the sacrifices of the Old Testament were a reminder of that. Our confession of sins at the beginning of every worship service is a reminder of that. It was our sins that nailed Christ to the cross. But as Peter says, God has used that as the salvation of souls. It was his death on the cross that forgave sins and made it possible for God to gather us in.

(2)

But REMEMBERING THE DAY OF PENTECOST is only half about gathering in, it is also about pouring out. In this case, the Holy Spirit being poured out on the disciples. The focus on this day, especially among certain parts of Christianity is *how* the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out. The primary focus is on the incredible fact that the disciples were speaking in languages they had never before studied. Unfortunately, these groups take this occurrence of Pentecost and apply it today saying anyone who wants to be a “true” Christian will have this experience. To say this is ultimately saying that Jesus is not enough, Jesus’ death on the cross was not enough to get us to heaven.

The pouring out we can focus on is not *how* the Holy Spirit came, but *that* he came. It certainly was an amazing thing the Holy Spirit did, allowing these men to speak in other languages. But even more amazing was what were they speaking, not mindless jibberish, they were speaking the wonders of God. They were proclaiming what God had done. They were proclaiming Jesus Christ was Lord, something one can only do by the power of the Holy Spirit. We see how the Holy Spirit turned these once timid men into bold proclaimers of his gospel.

As Peter noted when he got up to speak, people should not have been surprised this was happening. Peter turned back to the prophet Joel from the Old Testament, the lesson we just heard, **“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”** On both men and women, young and old, Jew and Gentile, God will pour out his Spirit. All people will prophesy. And when he says prophesy, it isn’t just referring to the foretelling of future events, but simply proclaiming God’s Word. God did this in an extraordinary way on Pentecost, and he does it in a more ordinary way now. Prophesying, proclaiming God’s Word, is something that you can do right now.

We are part of those *last days* Peter is talking about. The Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us. The Holy Spirit has poured out on us the greatest gift of faith. A byproduct of this gift of faith is the gift of proclaiming the wonders of God. It would be wonderful to proclaim it in a foreign tongue without studying, but it is just as effective to proclaim the wonders of God to a neighbor, a friend, a co-worker, in English.

It can be so easy to get caught up in the ‘spectacular’ of Pentecost, and if that helps us the REMEMBER IT, great. But we should not be so caught up in the spectacular that we don’t think God is working through simple means today. Simple means like baptism. Baptism is not our gift to God, but God’s gift to us – through which he offers and gives the forgiveness of sins. Simple means like the Lord’s Supper, where he offers and gives the forgiveness of sins in the super-rational connection of body and bread, blood and wine. Simple means like the Word of God, the Bible, which we read in church every Sunday, which you have available to read throughout the week. Don’t think these means aren’t powerful. Don’t think you need the spectacular to convince people. It is through these simple means that God works, and we REMEMBER THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

We may not be able to remember D-Day with the specific detail of those who lived through it, but we can remember it in the history books, and we can remember the brave men and women who have fought for our freedoms today. And just like D-Day was a key turning point in WWII, so Pentecost was a key turning point in God’s plan of salvation. It wasn’t like God’s plan was failing up until that point, you might say that at Pentecost he gave his church a shot of adrenaline. It was a day he gathered in people from all nations. A day when he poured out the blessing of the Holy Spirit on his people. And this is work that is still going on today, this is work that we are still a part of. He gathered us to be his people, and he has poured out his abundant blessings of mercy and grace upon us. REMEMBER THE DAY OF PENTECOST. Amen.