

“THE MARKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Text: Acts 2:1-21

Prayer: Holy Father, we cry out to you this morning as a people in a dry and thirsty land who desire spiritual food and water. Grant us insight from your Holy Word. We are helpless sinners in need of a very great Savior and a very present and powerful Holy Spirit. Fall afresh upon us and help us for the sake of your glory and your gospel. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Introduction.

Two weeks from today pastor Al Vander Griend will be teaching a one hour, five week adult Sunday school class on Spiritual Gifts. We hope that the fellowship hall downstairs is filled. We are planning something for the post nursery children so moms and dads can attend. This is a very important subject and as Paul says in I Corinthians 12:1, “concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.”

But before we can understand spiritual gifts we need to understand something about the source of those gifts and Pentecost Sunday is a perfect opportunity to be more informed about the Holy Spirit.

Introduction to Pentecost Sunday.

Pentecost is the name of a Jewish feast. The word literally means 50 days, referring to the number of days after Passover. 50 days after Passover every male Jew was required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the completion of the barley harvest and make sacrifices and offerings to the Lord.

On that day Jerusalem was filled with Jews from at least 15 different parts of the world. On that day God chose to send down His promised gift of His Holy Spirit. On that day was fulfilled the OT prophecy that God’s Holy Spirit would be poured out on all who believed.

Pentecost marks the penultimate act of God in salvation history. These are *the last days* before Christ returns and the world as we know it ends.

Brothers and Sisters, today is the day we come face to face with our need for renewal and revival, in our hearts and in our homes and in our church. Today is the day we are reminded of the supreme importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our world.

Supreme importance. Really, pastor? How big a deal is the Holy Spirit? How important is it to know the Holy Spirit? Is it even necessary to know who the Spirit is? Let me answer by declaring what Scripture says you cannot do without the Holy Spirit.

What you cannot do without the Holy Spirit.

You cannot say Jesus is Lord in true faith, except in the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3).

You cannot say Abba, Father except by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:15).

You cannot be an adopted child of God without the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:15).

You cannot do anything to please God without the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:8).

You cannot flee temptation and resist sin except in the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:13).

You cannot believe the Bible is true without the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:1-5).

You cannot understand or accept the things of God without God's Spirit (I Corinthians 2:11-16).

You cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without the Holy Spirit (John 3:5).

Without the Holy Spirit there would be no gospel, no NT, no repentance, no faith, no Church, no Christianity, no one in heaven. As a body without the spirit is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead.

How can we be saved? It takes a Trinity.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him [Jesus] we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access in one Spirit to the Father.

We cannot come to the Father, except through Jesus, and we cannot come to Jesus except by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not an it, He is a he, a person. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, as in "may the force be with you." The Holy Spirit is not like school spirit or team spirit or the American spirit. Everywhere in Scripture, both OT and NT, personal pronouns are used to refer to the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

In Scripture He speaks, teaches, witnesses, determines, acts, searches, selects, convicts, comforts, intercedes, is lied to and can be grieved. Only a personal being can do these things. He is God.

So our response to the Holy Spirit should not just be belief, or affirmation, or acceptance, but also a personal response of love, worship, adoration and obedience to the one who is the third person of the Holy Trinity.

We can enjoy a personal relationship with the Spirit and it's appropriate to pray to the Holy Spirit, who also prays for us and helps us in our prayers.

The Marks of the Holy Spirit.

How did the Spirit come?

Suddenly. Why is that important? Because it reminds us that the Spirit is God, He is sovereign, He is like the wind, He blows where He will blow, He comes and goes according to the pleasure of His own will. He is not bound to our wills or our desires or our timing.

Wind and fire. What are we to make of that? The same thing as suddenly. The Holy Spirit is not wind, He is not fire, He is not a dove, He is not tongues. But sometimes the Spirit stoops to use visible and audible ways to manifest ***His presence and power and plentitude***.

The fire and wind and tongues are not the most important part. In Acts 4:31 the Spirit falls again, but notice what happens this time.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

The focus is on God, on the ***presence and power and plentitude*** of God and on the response of His followers, who are equipped with new boldness, new passion.

God's Spirit is a Spirit of power and plentitude. By God's Spirit we know His power and by God's Spirit we know the riches of His generosity. What God does He does mightily and what God does He does abundantly.

The mark or evidence of the Spirit is ***power***, a violent rushing wind, flames of fires, enough to produce fear and awe. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in us.

The mark or evidence of the Spirit is ***plentitude***. In the OT God's Spirit came in a partial manner, coming upon some of the OT prophets, priests and kings. In the NT God's Spirit was poured out in fullness, first upon the life and ministry of Jesus, and then in fullness upon His disciples and His followers.

When the Spirit of God fell He filled the entire house. When the Spirit of God came He filled every one of them in the house. When the Spirit of God fell everyone in Jerusalem heard and saw and all were amazed.

You may not be aware of this but there are actually three Pentecosts in Acts. Acts 2 is the Jewish Pentecost when the Spirit falls on all the Jewish believers. In Acts 8 there is a Samaritan

Pentecost and in Acts 10 there is a Gentile Pentecost. The NT church is not exclusive, not just one ethnic group or one nation. All believers everywhere are gifted for ministry in the body of Christ.

Moving on we see with Peter the mark or evidence of the Spirit is the *preaching* of the Word of God. Where there is no Spirit there is no true preaching.

And following his preaching we see the mark or evidence of the Spirit in *conviction* of sin and repentance, a turning away from sinful behavior and seeking the forgiveness of Jesus. People freely desiring to give up their idols, their lusts, their gods, their greed.

The mark of the Holy Spirit is *changed* hearts, salvation, people being saved and added to the church; changed men and women, no longer living just for themselves, people giving away their money and possessions to help those in need.

Men and women being courageous, wise, joyful, self-sacrificing, patient, generous, long-suffering, prayerful. People willing to go the far away dark places, even scary places to tell the good news. Where the Spirit is there is life, salvation, forgiveness, joy, giving, service, spiritual fruit. The Spirit leaves a mark, a witness, a testimony to the presence, power and plentitude of God.

Application and Conclusion.

What happened at nine o'clock on Pentecost morning in that upper room marked the beginning of the final chapter in world history and the last chapter of salvation history.

We are living in the last days before Christ returns and the world as we know it ends. God started His Church by pouring out His Spirit on her. Fire fell from the very throne of God; in fact, God Himself personally came and filled them with His power from on high.

When the end of these last days comes what will it look like? The prophecy in Joel says it will be bad news and good news. There will be darkness and blood. There will be moral, social and political chaos; there will be world conflict and natural disasters of earth shattering proportions.

But there will also be a pouring out of God's Spirit on all flesh, meaning all the nations will be reached. There will be great revival and spiritual awakening and "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

In some small way we are a part of that story. And in some small way the gifts the Spirit has given us have a part to play in what the Spirit is doing in all the earth. We need to fan those small flames. In the midst of conflict and suffering, the Church of Jesus Christ is going to play a world changing role and we are pieces in that larger puzzle.

As we use our piece here and then as First CRC adds its larger piece to other churches, God is glorified, Christ is exalted, the Spirit is unleashed and the Kingdom of Christ is built up and overcomes the kingdom of the world.

We are in the age of the Spirit of God powerfully and plentifully working all over the world in huge ways and in small. The Spirit is shifting power structures, changing whole movements of humanity, raising up leaders and bringing them down, purifying the church through suffering, and adding to the church countless millions of souls being saved.

Everything we do after we become Christians is flowing from and being directed by the Holy Spirit. He has given us His power, His gifts, for ministry and service, to make a difference in the church and in the world and to be a blessing and benefit to those around us.

We are not our own, we are bought with a price and we are bought for a purpose that is greater than us.

Jesus told His disciples don't leave Jerusalem without His Spirit. I plead with you don't leave this life without Him, don't live another day without Him. Repent and believe for the forgiveness of your sins in Jesus Christ and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone who is born again is filled with the Holy Spirit. There are not further fillings, but there are further releasings, yieldings, submittings, surrenderings.

Ask for an increased empowering and emboldening of the Holy Spirit in your life; ask for the enabling grace to submit and surrender to the Spirit more and more; ask for a deliverance from any bondage to sin or fear that hinders or quenches the Spirit's work in your life; ask for a greater ability to discern His work in your life. Plan to come to the Spiritual Gifts class that you may better understand how God's Spirit wants to live and work in you.

Revelation 2:7 He that has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Prayer: We believe in you, Holy Spirit. We affirm your presence and your power. We worship and adore you. We love you and we desire you, we seek you. We want to know you better and to experience all that you have for us. Be glorified in our worship and in our lives. We surrender our lives to the flames of your refining, purging, purifying fire. Come Holy Spirit. Prepare our hearts and lives to receive your fullness, that we might know you and love you and obey you and be your bold witnesses and turn the world upside down for the sake of Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.