

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Today we do celebrate the festival of Pentecost.

- Can you imagine what that first Pentecost must have been like for the disciples?

So the disciples had been with Jesus during His earthly ministry.

- He had told them He would go to the cross and die.....but raise from the dead.
- They really never understood this.

And then when it happened, they abandoned Him and went into hiding.

- Jesus came to them.
- And He told them He would return to His Father; but that He would send them the Holy Spirit.
- And, that they should go ahead of Him to Galilee—that would be North of Jerusalem.

And then last week we saw where Jesus blessed them and ascended into heaven.

- Right before their very eyes.
- They gazed into heaven as Jesus disappeared into the clouds.

And 2 angels appeared before them and said.....

- Men of Galilee—why do you stand here looking into the sky?
- Everything that this Jesus had said He has done.

And then we are told they returned to Jerusalem, just as Jesus had instructed them.

- And they went back to Jerusalem.....with great joy.
- And they remained together—continually at the temple praising God.
- Jesus had also told them that they should stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them.
- And then they would be His witnesses of Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

But when would that be?

- How would they know? What would that be like?

They all stayed together in joy and faith and praised God. Waiting!

- And then it happened.
- That first Pentecost.
- And that is where our reading from the Book of Acts picks up today.

We are told that when the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

- The Festival of Weeks, the forerunner to the Festival of Pentecost would have been going on in Jerusalem.
- There would have been very, very many people in the city.

And suddenly there came from heaven, a mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.....

- And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested upon each of them.

The sound of a mighty rushing wind.....but there was no wind.

- Where did that come from?

And what about those tongues of fire?

Where did they come from?

- How do they handle this?
- It must have been pretty amazing for the disciples.
- It must have been quite a day for the disciples.

Certainly, the Holy Spirit was present in the sound of rushing wind.

- And the tongues of fire?
- That would remind them of in Old Testament times when Elijah had the battle with the false prophets of Baal.

You remember that.

- They both built altars to then see who is the true God and who is the false one.
- Who would send fire to consume the altar.

The false prophets of Baal went first.

- All day and nothing happened.

And then it was Elijah's turn.....

- And you know what happened.
- Fire came from heaven and consumed everything.
- The sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and also the water that had been poured around the altar.

And now as a reminder of the faithfulness of God.....

- Tongues of fire it appeared were resting on the disciple's heads.

And these men.....

- At one time confused.....in hiding.....and unsure of themselves.....
- Were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And the people they spoke to in Jerusalem were amazed.

- Oh, there were some who made fun of them and accused them of being drunk.
- Although it was only 9:00 in the morning!

And Peter began to boldly proclaim.....

- That they crucified this Jesus.....but He rose from the dead.

And we are told the people were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles.....

- What should we do?
- And we are given Peter's response in Acts chapter 2 verses 38 and 39.
- 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."
- And those who accepted this message that day and believed and were baptized was 3,000 men plus women and children.

Quite a day.

- And here we have the beginning of the New Testament Church.
- Pentecost is often called the birthday of the Church.

Well, that is all good and well; but what about us today?

- We too are the New Testament Church and in that line of succession.
- What do we get out of this and how does that look for us today?

The disciples were all together in joy and worship.

- We who are here are together in joy and worship.
- The disciples were praising God.
- We are singing praises to our King.

The disciples had been confused, unsure of themselves, even at times in fear.

- We too are at times confused, unsure of ourselves—tentative/fearful to tell others about Christ.

And then the Holy Spirit came upon them.

- Where God's Word is present and our hearts are open.....the Holy Spirit will come upon us.
- On our own we can do nothing.
- It is the Holy Spirit who created faith in you, increases your faith and gives you the strength, the courage, the message, and all that you need to proclaim Christ.

And the disciples went forth and boldly spoke in many languages—each hearer receiving it as they understood.

- And we go forth in oneness and a single language of the love of Christ.

All people no matter who they are have basic needs.

- They all have common problems, things that causes them to worry, and things that cause them to fear.
- People understand guilt and shame.
- Most importantly, all people must face death.

ALL PEOPLE would benefit immensely from God's answer to these things.

- The answers are found in Jesus Christ.
- We know that—the Holy Spirit has created faith in us.
- And just as Christ was given to us—it is now for us to share Christ with others.
- To have them see Jesus.

The first Pentecost was quite a spectacular scene.

- What does that look like for us today?
- It is someone who calmly, quietly invites someone to church.
- It is someone who tells their neighbor about Christ and what He means to them.
- It is someone who invites a child to join us for Vacation Bible School at the end of July.
- It is someone who visits someone in a nursing home or hospital and shows and shares with them the love of Christ.
- It is someone who calls an inactive member and invites and welcomes them to come back and be with us.
- It is someone who invites a family member to come see Jesus.
- The list goes on and on.

The first Pentecost was the birthday of the New Testament Church and now we carry on that birth day to others and all generations.

- The disciples were told to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.
- We too are called to go to Granite City, Madison County, all of Illinois and to the ends of the earth.

At the end of the day we are sharing the news with others about another person.....Jesus Christ.

- God has made us conduits for connecting people to Jesus.
- We have been put on this earth at this time and in this place for other people to know Jesus.

Some may say I can't do that.

- The word evangelism all by itself seems intimidating.
- Some say, I need special skills.
- I'm not exceptionally gifted or trained.

You can't do it.....by yourself.

- Just as the disciples did, you need the Holy Spirit and He promises to be with you.
- Sometimes we make it too complicated.
- All you need to do is show the love of Christ to others in words and actions.

Some may say I can't make a difference.

- Have you heard the story of the starfish on the beach and the little boy and the old man?
- The old man walking along the beach came upon a child sifting through the debris left by the night's tide.

- The ocean had now rescinded and there were items left on shore.
- This included thousands and thousands of starfish for miles along the shore.

The young boy was picking up these starfish and throwing them back into the water, one at a time.

- The old man asked the young boy the purpose of his efforts.
- The young boy replied, the tide has washed the starfish onto the beach and they will die unless I throw them back.

The old man looked around at all the starfish and miles of beach and said.....

- There are more starfish than you could ever save.
- You cannot make a difference.
- The child bent down, picked up another starfish and flung it back into the water.
- And then he looked at the old man and smiled and replied.....
- Tell that one I didn't make a difference to him.

Our Lord approached people one at a time.

- We do the same.

Will it be easy?

- No.
- As successful as that first Pentecost was, we are told some people made fun of the disciples and even thought they were drunk.
- But many were added to the kingdom that day.
- And so it can be for you and me.

Today is Pentecost. It is considered the birthday of the New Testament Church.

- There have been many metaphors used for the church.
- One is a ship.
- This sanctuary we are sitting in is called a nave.
- That is Latin for ship.
- Look at the structure here of the building and roof, and turn it upside down and it looks exactly like a ship.

This ship, the church, brings peace and security from the storms of the world.

- It also takes us into the harbor of a blessed world; called heaven or the restored creation that we look forward to one day.

- This ship will not be wrecked; despite the gates of hell you will joyfully land on the shores of that eternal paradise where only the blessed live.
- Where those who have gone before you in the faith now have their rest.

There is room in this ship for many more.

- May we invite, welcome them to join us; and have that peace, joy, security that we have.

The account of that first Pentecost ends this way.

- Acts chapter 2 verses 42 through 47. Selected portions.
- They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and the breaking of bread and prayer.
- All the believers were together and had everything in common.
- Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts.
- They had glad and sincere hearts, praising God.
- And the Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved.

That first Pentecost, it must have been pretty spectacular.

- The picture of Pentecost today need not be all that much different.
- God grant this for Jesus' sake.
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God, we now prepare our hearts and minds to say together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.