

The Day of Pentecost

“In these last days, God pours out His Spirit on you, His servant!” (Acts 2:17-18)

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Day of Pentecost is from our epistle reading, Acts 2:17-18

**“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams.
And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy.”**

Here ends our text.

In the past two Sundays the anticipation of today, Pentecost Sunday, has been building as we have gone through the first chapter of Acts in our first reading!

God’s plan for the evangelization of the world was coming to its glorious completion. In the 40 days that Jesus showed that He was alive with infallible proofs as Luke writes in Acts 1:3, He was preparing His chosen disciples to begin the New Testament church. For God wants all people to be saved. That’s the very purpose for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

As Peter says in the last verse of our epistle reading from Acts 2:21, quoting from Joel 2...

“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

That is the main purpose for the sending of the Holy Spirit – the saving of lost souls – souls that need to be saved from eternal death and hell. This is God’s plan save any “whoever” from damnation. For God wants all to be saved. This plan He unfolded before our very eyes.

His disciples asked Jesus during the 40 days after His resurrection, as we read in Acts 1: **“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 And He**

said to them, **“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

You don't need to know all of God's plans, especially when He is going to come back again and restore a new heavens and a new earth. But this you need to know and this needs to be your focus – in the meantime you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth!

Jesus was preparing these few 120 believers who had kept the faith, the ones He prayed for as we heard in John 17 last week, for the start, for the explosion, of the New Testament church on Pentecost.

Jesus ascends. His believers carry on the work of being His witnesses to all people. But, didn't we hear last week that Jesus said in His high priestly prayer in John 17., **“9 “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.”**

Wasn't Jesus saying as the Reformed believe that Jesus only wants some to be saved and not others? I was asked this question after church last week, and it's a good question, because the Reformed church terribly misinterprets God's plan of salvation. Jesus was praying especially for His believers in His High Priestly prayer, the very ones who were to carry on His work of reaching all the lost. That doesn't mean that Jesus doesn't pray for unbelievers. Of course He does!

We heard during the Lenten season from Isaiah 53 these very comforting words. **“He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.”**

And again, we hear in 1 John 2:1 these words: **“if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”**

God's word can't be any clearer to us than this. His plan of salvation was carried out by Jesus not for only some as the Reformed believe, but for all.. for anyone! For you and me! For we need Jesus the Advocate for our sins! And Jesus makes intercession, prays for all. He advocates for all, not just believers.

Now, comes the second part of God's glorious plan of salvation. How are these "anyones", how are these "whoevers" that call on the name of the Lord, going to hear about Jesus in order to call upon His name. How were you and I saved?

That brings us to today, doesn't it? God's plan could not be thwarted. What sinful man could not do and what sinful man opposes, God overthrows with His saving power.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;”

Not just some, but all flesh. Quoting Joel, Peter goes into detail, doesn't he? Men, women, young, old. No distinction. God pours out His Spirit on all ages, male and female, servants and freed. God wants all to participate in the evangelization of the world. And that again includes you and me! Everyone here in this church is included! The Holy Spirit has been poured out on you and continues to be poured out on you through His Word and Sacraments!

“you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”, Jesus said in Acts 1.

Jesus said in Luke 24:

“46 Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things. 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

The work that Jesus began with a few simple fishermen carries on this day, this Day of Pentecost through you and me. We are living in the days of the fulfillment of the prophecies of Joel. We are living in these last days!

And God's plan has not changed. His purpose to save the lost has not changed. His method of using sinners like you and me to carry His glorious message of salvation has not changed. It was necessary that Jesus suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. And it IS necessary that repentance and remission of sins should be preached beginning at Jerusalem! Not ending at Jerusalem! But going to all nations!

Yes, the Holy Spirit endued the small group of 120 on Pentecost with special gifts of visions, dreams and prophecy. The apostles received God's Word in these special ways as God continued to communicate it to them in what we now have as the 27 books of the New Testament. Paul received extraordinary visions as he says in 2 Corinthians 12: **“how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”**

He didn't want to boast about himself that he was privileged to hear God's Word in such a way, only that he was given the privilege to preach Christ Crucified to the nations!

And we too, have been given this privilege as Jesus' royal priesthood, His special people, His Holy nation to proclaim what Jesus has done who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light! (1 Peter 2:9)

The same Holy Spirit has poured out His gifts on each of you believers, men, women, young and old to be His witnesses of His death and resurrection. You are His witnesses of salvation for all in these last days! Pentecost continues through you and me as God gathers the harvest and brings His first fruits of believers to Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, we see God's plan unfolding in Acts 1 and 2. A twelfth apostle had to be chosen to take Judas Iscariot's office as prophesied in Psalm 109. The birth of the New Testament church and built on the teaching of the 12 apostles with Christ as the Chief Cornerstone could not be stopped because of betrayal and unbelief.

God's plan continues to unfold and cannot be stopped. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the church that Christ is building. (Matthew 16:18) Though some turn away from Him and betray Him in unbelief in these last days. God's plan of salvation continues through His believers, in His time and season, in His place, right here and right now. God continues to pour out His Holy Spirit on each of us, His servants, to tell others what we have been given by the Holy Spirit to believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And whoever calls on His name will be saved! Keep telling! Keep witnessing! That the lost may call on the Lord and the living sheaves of Pentecost may be gathered right here and right now in these last days! Amen

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)