

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ✠

This Feast of Pentecost that we observe is the fulfillment of what Christ has been prophesying to us the last several weeks of Easter. The fulfillment of the promise of the sending of the Holy Spirit, the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel. These things are fulfilled in the history of the Acts of the Apostles. When they all gathered together, waiting at Christ's word in Jerusalem, they heard the sound of a rushing wind, where the Spirit descended on them in tongues of fire, and they began to speak in tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

But it is not just Joel that is fulfilled, but Babel undone, for there was another time when the man was united in voice, in language, in vocabulary, and God descended down upon him once before. The Lord scattered their languages and drove them apart. Their sin brought about their own demise. And that is what this account at Babel shows: the foreshadowing of Holy Baptism is not yet the fullness of Christ's plan. That even the world post-flood, post the deliverance of Noah, post this great deliverance event found in the ark, through the flood, the world is not yet fully cleansed, for mere water alone does not cleanse. The world is not yet restored; water brings death instead of life.

The sons of men, the descendants of Noah, completely refused to listen to the commands given. The commandment given first to Adam and Eve, then to Noah upon the ark, as he left it, "be fruitful and multiply". Fill the earth, spread out, and rule over creation. Be a steward and a ruler over what I have given you.

And what do those wicked descendants do? After being saved from destruction, immediately man goes right back to their way of neglecting the commandments of God and turning to their own desires. Placing their own mind, their own wills, their own wants over God as a determiner of good and evil. God says, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth. We're going to stay here, and we're going to build a tower to heaven so God can't harm us. Instead of trusting in the grace of God to provide and protect them. Instead of rejoicing in the great task the Lord has given them for their glory, they turn to their own self-righteousness and their own power for carnal security. They trade the glory of God for

the image of created things.

So what if God sends another flood? Our tower will reach the heavens. It is built with bricks, and it is mortared with bitumen. It is waterproof. Send the rain. Send the floods, God. We do not care. They build a tower in order to preserve themselves, to preserve their way of life, their way of thinking, and attempt to prevent the annihilation of their culture and people. And they rejected the promises given to Noah that he would not send another flood to destroy the earth, but instead chose to live in fear and hatred of God, trusting in their own strength and ability, and doubting God's word.

God, seeing their sin, seeing their unwillingness to do what he has ordained for them, would indeed have been very right to send another flood, to give them exactly what they asked for, to wipe them from the face of the earth.

But he shows forth his character by acting mercifully toward them. Instead of wiping them out, he scatters their languages. Without a common tongue, they could not live together on the plains of Shinar. Through their punishment, God actually enables them to do what he has instructed them to do from the beginning. The evil man seeks to work, God uses for his own good and glorious plans. And it is the job and role of mankind to bring the word of God to the whole world, to fill it with his praise, and to tell of his mercy. And we could not do that, huddled in a tower on the plains of Shinar. There on the plains, God descended, and the languages were scattered, and the people went out. And by this God was merciful, withholding His wrath.

And now on Pentecost, the wrath of God being appeased by the cross of Christ, the exact opposite happens. The people gather, God descends, and language is united. Pentecost is really the fulfillment of the Tower of Babel, a return to what should have been. No longer is man split by his own language and divisions created, but here in the working of the Spirit, mankind is gathered together again and unified. The Spirit descends and the Church is given again the task of preaching and proclaiming the Word. For this Word is the common tongue of man. It is not English, it is not Spanish,

it is not Hebrew or Greek or Aramaic. The common tongue of mankind is the very word of God. It is the reason your lips were created: to speak his commandments, to praise his name, and to converse with your Lord with his own words.

The true miracle of Pentecost is not that the disciples spoke in tongues. The true miracle that each person hears in their mother tongue. The curse bestowed at Babel now becomes a blessing. The Spirit operates according to God's wisdom, not according to ours. He doesn't create a new universal language. The disciples aren't speaking in some made-up tongue. They're not babbling off in some angelic language. They are speaking, and people are hearing them speak in their own language. He empowers men to hear the gospel in their own native languages, and you have that same gift today. The great miracle of Pentecost is that you, a Gentile, you, a sinner, have been gathered in. Someone who had been cast out and forbidden from the temple courts are now invited into the Holy of Holies. You are invited by the Spirit to believe and hear the gospel. This is the role of the Church. This is the blessing of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Spirit.

The church is given the task of proclaiming this to all the nations that were scattered. By the church Babel is undone, people who were once scattered are now brought together and united. The languages that are confused are made one, not by the removal of languages, but by a unifying message, by a return to a unifying vocabulary of the gospel. This is the working of the Spirit and what the Spirit enables us to do.

You know it well, or should know it, The third article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen." What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot, by my own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way, he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole

Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ and the one true faith. In this Christian church, he daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. And on the last day, he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

On this day of Pentecost, we are not to become enthusiasts searching for that great feeling of the Spirit within ourselves, hoping for some great emotional high to proclaim “this is what is certainly true”. This, I know, is real because I have some great feeling and longing for it. No. We know it is true for it is the Word of God. And God does not lie. He speaks rightly. And he gives it to us so that we might believe.

As we come together on this day of Pentecost to celebrate and rejoice in the giving of the Spirit, where do we find it? If you're looking inward, you have a problem. If you are looking inward for the signs of the Spirit, you are mistaken. The signs of the Spirit are external. The proof of the outpouring of the Spirit is not in you, but in the Word of God, for the Spirit is where the Word of God goes. He is the Spirit of truth, and God's Word is truth. And so as the waters were poured out upon your head in baptism, and the pastor said, I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, It is not the pastor who speaks, but Christ speaking through him. And the Spirit accompanies that word. Water alone cannot do such great and marvelous things as bring salvation, but it is the water included with God's command and combined with God's word. When your pastor stands at the altar and says, "This is my body and this is my blood", It is not my words or Pastor Weinkauf's words that mean anything. But again, we stand persona Christi. We stand as the person of Christ to you, and it is not us who speaks, but Christ speaking through us. And when the word of Christ is spoken, his spirit descends. It comes and it comes to rest upon this altar in the form of bread and wine.

The body and the blood of Christ for you.

Our temptation is to always want more. Enthusiasts love this day. They say, look at what the apostles were doing, and they say, " This is wonderful. They're going out, and they're speaking in tongues. We should do the same. But this is not the reason this gift was given. The apostles were given the gift of tongues so the church might see her role. That her job, her calling, her vocation is to proclaim the gospel to all nations and to all people. So the command given to man after the fall might be fulfilled. So we might be fruitful and multiply, not just as man upon the earth, but as Christians. That we might bear Christ to all people. We might baptize them and teach them to obey all that the Lord has commanded us.

✠ In Jesus name. Amen. ✠