

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

Day of Pentecost
Sunday, May 31, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

“When the Holy Spirit Comes, Everything Changes”

Acts 2:1-21

Today we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. The disciples are all in one place (from context of the rest of Scripture, they are in the upper room where they have been for seven weeks apart from the fishing trip up to Galilee where Jesus met them on the shore), and they are waiting, just like Jesus instructed them to do.

Spending seven weeks locked up out of sight of the public because of fear is something that we can perhaps empathize with more this Pentecost than we did in the past. As I said the Sunday after Easter, when we discussed “Doubting Thomas,” the disciples were “in the Upper Room with the doors locked for fear of the Jews” and Jesus appeared to them. And then, of course, eight days later, they were still in the Upper Room with the doors locked, but this time, Thomas was with them. We know the story. We hear it every year – the week after Easter.

Other than when the disciples went to Galilee, because Jesus told them to go and He would meet them there, and 10 days before Pentecost, when Jesus and the disciples went out to the Mount of Olives in the vicinity of Bethany, as Scripture tells us, and He ascended into heaven. Luke tells us that they were to stay in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is the turning point. The Holy Spirit comes and everything changes. Up until this point, the disciples were more than a little confused in regard to what they were supposed to be doing. The 50 days since Easter did little to clarify what the next move should be for the disciples.

If you remember back to the time immediately before and after Easter, the disciples were a lot confused. Peter was telling Jesus that there is no way that Jesus can be handed over to the chief priests and be crucified – “May this never be, Lord.” And Jesus says, “Get behind Me Satan.” And when the soldiers come to the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter pulls out his sword and cuts off the ear of Malcus, the disciples scatter and hide, and Peter, three times, denies even knowing Him. They don’t even show up to help bury Him. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea take care of that.

The morning of the resurrection, the disciples “refuse to believe” the words of the women who came from the empty tomb. Peter and John go into the empty

tomb and still don't know what to think. Thomas absolutely will not believe until he, not only can see it with his own eyes, but until he can put his finger into the marks of the nails and his hand into His side, "I will never believe," he says.

After that, the disciples still don't know what to do next. A group of them (7 of them) go fishing. This is what they knew before Jesus called them to be "fishers of men." Jesus meets them on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and He eats with them, and Jesus restores Peter – three times saying, "Do you love Me? Then feed my sheep."

Then, 40 days after Easter, Jesus ascends into heaven, but first He tells His disciples to wait in Jerusalem because the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is coming. And He comes and there is a sound like a mighty rushing wind and these fearful, hiding, denying, doubting disciples suddenly become bold preachers in all the languages of the people. Everything changes when the Holy Spirit comes.

This is what we confess in Luther's Small Catechism. "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."

For you and me, everything changed when the Holy Spirit came. This doesn't mean that we were able to speak in a multitude of languages on the day of our Baptism. In fact, I couldn't speak any language on the day of my Baptism.

The ability to “speak miraculously” was unique to the days of the apostles. St. Paul says that the gift of tongues will cease [1 Cor. 13:8] – and they have.

And through their preaching and the power of the Holy Spirit, as He is the One “who calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth,” (again, from Luther’s Catechism), the Holy Spirit brings 3000 people to faith that day and they are baptized by the apostles.

And from there, the apostles go throughout Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Thomas went all the way to India and was killed there because of his faith). The work of the Holy Spirit was evident.

When the Holy Spirit comes, He changes everything. Look to your own life. When the Holy Spirit comes to you and washes you and you are baptized into the name of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Holy Acts 2:1-21 Spirit teaches you with the very Word of God which bears His name, and He feeds you with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ which is the name that is above every name – and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess the name of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.

When the Holy Spirit comes, He changes everything, because, as Peter proclaimed in his great sermon on Pentecost, “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Amen.