

The Promise of Pentecost Power Part II

Acts 2:14-47

When the evangelist Gypsy Smith was asked to name the greatest need of the church, sometime before he died in 1947, he answered, "Another Pentecost!" When he was asked about the 2ed greatest need, he answered, "Another Pentecost!" When asked about the third greatest need, he answered, "Another Pentecost!" We could say the same today, especially as we discern and decide about our future. We do see God at work in marvelous ways. But we want to see more of God at work here, now, soon!

If people had been asked in 1968 who would dominate the world in watch making for the foreseeable future, the answer would have been: Switzerland. Why? Because they had dominated the world of watch making for 60 years. The Swiss made the best watches in the world. They were committed to constant refinement of their expertise. They came up with the minute hand and the second hand. They led the world in discovering better ways to manufacture the gears, mainsprings, and enhanced durability. They led the way in waterproofing techniques and self-winding models. By 1968, the Swiss made 65 % of all watches sold in the world and laid claim to as much as 90 % of the profits.

But by 1980, just 12 years later, they controlled less than 10 % of the world market. Their profit domination dropped to less than 20 %. Between 1979 and 1981, 50,000 of the 60,200 Swiss watchmakers lost their jobs. Why? They refused to consider a new development - the Quartz watch - ironically, invented by a Swiss. Because it had no main-spring or knob, it was rejected. It was too much of a paradigm shift for them to embrace. Seiko, on the other hand, accepted it and with a few other companies became the leaders in the watch industry.

The lesson of the Swiss watchmakers is profound. A past that was so secure, so profitable, so dominant was destroyed by an unwillingness to consider the future. It was more than not

being able to make predictions. It was an inability to re-think how they did business. Past success had blinded them to the importance of seeing the implications of the changing world and to admit that past accomplishment was no guarantee of future success.

Too often it's the same in the church. We can probably boil the reasons down to 3 **dynamics** that keep us from being swept up in the winds of the Holy Spirit. **First, *satisfaction with the tried and true, over risk taking.*** Or another way to say it is, satisfaction with the familiar and contempt for the new. This shows up in many areas of life that we are familiar with.

Contempt for the new often blinds us to the fresh blessings God wants to pour out upon His people through the Holy Spirit. This is a constant theme in the Bible. The parable of the wineskins and old garments warns us:

"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." (Matthew 9:16-17)

The **second** dynamic that keeps us from being swept up in the fire of the Holy Spirit, can be called ***practical atheism.*** Quoting Paul Sherer, Yale professor and Methodist preacher Hal Luccock, they warned us about "anniversary Christians" in a sermon called Power for the Task, way back in 1938:

"We Christians seem to have developed a kind of memorial complex. ...All some of us can manage is a pleasant historical mood. I grow just a bit weary of anniversaries. Religion is like marriage in this: it can fall away until it becomes little more than a celebration of anniversaries. It never seems to occur to some couples that they could do more than just remember that they were happy once. It isn't necessary every year to refer the matter of your

wedded bliss to a committee on antiquities. Is Pentecost just a subject for research and debate and a curiosity, or can it occur again?"

So we have to ask ourselves, are our individual lives a monument to the past or a movement into the future? Is the church a monument to the past or a movement into the future? Are we acting like God is alive? Or are we acting like God is dead?

Lloyd Ogilvie uses this example, "We make our budgets with the assumption of what people would give if Christ had never been raised from the dead." Do we make our decisions on what we want to do & on what we know is practical, or on what God wants to gift us and in the way he wants to lead us?

This is a reason we have an *opportunity fund* line item in the budget. We don't know when God will offer or confront or deliver us with an opportunity. Such a line item is a sign of our willingness to show God we are prepared for change and adjustments in our church life.

Jesus put it like this, "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:25). "

Oswald Chambers said it this way, "As soon as you begin to live the life of faith in God, fascinating and luxurious prospects will open up before you ... let God choose for you ... We have to learn to walk according to the standard which has its eye on God." Simply, go with God! Get swept up by the Holy Spirit winds. Become Pentecostal! Like those first century Christians, seek and wait for Him to come. And open our hands, hearts and heads to be ready when the Holy Spirit winds start blowing in our direction. Let's allow ourselves to be blessed!"

A **third** dynamic that keeps us from being swept up in the fire of the Holy Spirit is *fear*. We fear upsetting anyone, so we keep our questions quiet and our ideas to ourselves. We have seen how people argue and then people leave the church. On the one hand some don't

"fight" fair, and on the other we don't fight hard and long enough. So we end up going through the motions, walking on egg shells, with a lack of zip, being too sensitive and fearful with the result – fear becomes a core part of congregational life. A way this is seen is in not openly discussing with each other.

Geoffrey James wrote: "To conquer fear, you must consciously dethrone "security" as the thing that you value most in your life and replace it with the active virtue of "courage." You must decide, once and for all, that it's more important for you to have the courage to do what you must to succeed, rather than to cling to the things that make you feel safe." We need to value courage over security and treat our fears as a call to action. Plus, James says, "Let's reframe our fears into excitement."

Here are some Bible verses teaching us about fear. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7). "Fear of humans will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe." (Proverbs 29:25). "Jesus told us, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.'" (Mark 5:36)

Let's remind ourselves of what we learned from the Pentecost story last week. **First**, the disciples were waiting to receive power - for the fulfillment of a promise by Jesus.

Second, they were together and we believe this had at least four aspects. They were discussing what they learned from and about Jesus. They were reflecting together on the events they lived through. They were worshipping. We can believe they were praying to Jesus, like Jesus had taught them and modeled so often.

More than likely they were studying scripture. I like to imagine that Nicodemus, a religious teacher, was with them, helping them tie together Old Testament scriptures about Jesus. And they were waiting, expectantly. Trusting, not knowing what surprise they would receive.

Third, we were reminded of how the Holy Spirit showed its power. With a sound like the blowing of a violent wind that came from heaven and filled the whole house. Tongues of fire came and rested on each of them. Being heard by people from all over, each in their own language. And the invisible way the Holy Spirit showed itself was, all of them were filled with the Spirit and knew they were changed.

The Fourth learning from the first Pentecost is, Pentecost power led to preaching. We have this marvelous sermon that Peter preached on the core of the Gospel. He was focused on Jesus. He stayed on message.

In seminary we learned that there are four kinds of preaching. Each are important. **One** is like an announcement. It is a clear, plain statement of the facts of God's message. A **second** style of preaching literally means teaching. It explains the meanings and significance of the facts which have been proclaimed. The **third** way of preaching is exhortation. This calls us, urges us to carry out our obligations and duties which are the ethical outcroppings of the Good News. And **fourth**, preaching is the treatment of any subject or area of life in the light of the Christian message. It's why we call preaching a homily. Its practical application of the information received.

Every congregation needs to receive each of these types of preaching. Each have a different purpose to help us learn about the Bible and follow Jesus. Most preachers tend to lean more toward one of these styles, and are better at one of these forms of preaching. But I suspect most preachers use all four kinds of preaching. Announcement of the Gospel. Teaching the facts of Good News. Appealing, encouraging and urging people to be followers of Jesus. Fourth, a focus on spiritual edification rather than just doctrinal instruction. But often these forms are intermingled in every sermon.

Acts 2:14-41 is the **record of the sermon that Peter preached on that day of Pentecost**. His main thrust was explaining Jesus to people. It

would be as if Billy Graham was preaching on the theme "Four Steps to Peace with God" or Bill Bright of Campus Crusade announcing "The Four Spiritual Laws."

Peter spoke to the crowd, declaring that the men and women, speaking in tongues were not drunk, because it was only 9 in the morning.

Then he told them that what was occurring was the fulfillment of what the prophet Joel had predicted. He zeros in on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Peter next quotes twice from King David, explaining that he prophesied Jesus' resurrection. (2:25-28; 2:34-35) So he uses Scripture that at least some of the people may have been familiar with to prove his point. He declares, the promised Messiah had come. The atoning work was accomplished. Therefore let all Israel be assured: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord & Christ

Then fifth, we learn from the first Pentecost, the work of the Holy Spirit always provokes a response. It got people's attention. **First**, people who heard the message in their own language, were amazed, perplexed, wondered what it meant. Others made fun of the disciples.

Then, **second**, (b) those hearing Peter were "cut to the heart" and asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (37) The Holy Spirit with Peter's preaching had provoked a response.

Peter answered simply, directly and clearly. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

And I love his next words which explain what was going on at the first Pentecost. "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." (2:38-39) The term far off is another reminder this gift from Almighty God is for everyone, those hearing that day, those who would hear it later and those who hear it now!

Then Peter continued to preach, warning them of the corruptness of this generation and pleaded with the crowd: “Save yourselves.”

The result? “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (2:41). This preaching has announcement, exhortation, teaching, and application to all of life.

(c) 3000 people accepted the Gospel message, **believed and were baptized.** We know they were people from all over the world. This was another sign that Jesus is for everyone – not just Jews. This continued the Old Testament trajectory of being a light to the nations, that led the early church to accept that Gentiles could become followers of Jesus – you and me!

A summary of Pentecost is, it’s about a promise from Jesus offering power, people expecting, trusting, waiting to receive it, so they change.

Generally people want to be changed for the better. Since we are created in the image of our Creator, this means God is interested in **change**. If we would summarize Pentecost with one word, it would be “change.” Some major changes took place at the first Pentecost.

Also, (d) the disciples changed. They were confused about all kinds of different things about Jesus. They were scared & not confident. But with the Holy Spirit entering them and empowering them, they were not confused. They understood God’s plan of salvation much better. They were no longer timid.

Think about Peter. Two months earlier he was so afraid that he denied Jesus. But then with the Holy Spirit’s help he spoke to the crowd with confidence, authority and understanding. We know from the stories in Acts, the believers became so fearless, the religious authorities were astonished as they were filled with the Holy Spirit & spoke the word of God – boldly, even when told to stop and were threatened. (Acts 4:10, 31)

Another change was, **new or refreshed habits, practices, and attitudes.** (e) You have had over the years, I assume, lots of sermons and studies on Acts 2:42-47. So I won’t dwell on this except to point out five practices the early church is known for. **First**, they will eager and willing to be taught. **Second**, they were filled with awe and wonder at the miraculous signs the apostles did. **Third**, they cared for each other. **Fourth**, they worshipped together. And **Fifth**, their community kept growing.

And I wish we knew more about Acts 6, verse 7. It says, “A large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” Did this provide a broad basis of leadership for the church?

So the question we asked a week ago, would you give up Pentecost?, is a key question for us today. I think it’s an essential event in the life of the church of Christ Jesus. We need Holy Spirit power among us today. We have experienced her in our lives. And we need it as we vision, discern, and wait for wisdom about our congregational future. Our Lord is the One who calls us to step out of the boat and walk on water. Jesus is the One who calls us to take up the cross and follow Him. Christ is the One who calls us to risk everything to find his kind of security. Our Lord Jesus is the God who calls us to love our lives for Him, in order to find life in Him. God wants us to trust in his Pentecost power.

Please join with me in praying this song as we enter into communion. When the song ends please pray silently, then I will end this time with a spoken prayer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYfzcYohWZg> Spirit of the Living God

Prayer in preparation for Communion

It is our duty and delight, Lord God, to give you thanks and praise for all that you have done for the world. Our hearts are full of gratitude to you, because you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life. We thank you Jesus was born among us;

that he lived our common life on earth; teaches and models for us, that he suffered and died for us, that he rose again, and he is always present through the Holy Spirit. May the Holy Spirit fall again and in new ways upon us today. We thank you for the gift of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit to help us live for you. Amen.

Explain communion process.

Power can be used in at least two ways: it can be unleashed, or it can be harnessed. The energy in ten gallons of gasoline, for instance, can be released explosively by dropping a lighted match into the can. Or it can be channeled through the engine of a vehicle in a controlled burn and used to transport a person 350 miles. Explosions are spectacular, but controlled burns have lasting effect, staying power. The Holy Spirit works both ways.

At Pentecost, he exploded on the scene; His presence was like "tongues of fire." Thousands were affected by one burst of God's power. But she also works through the institution of God's church to tap the Holy Spirit's power for the long haul. Through fellowship, faithfulness, worship, witness, service, and hope, followers of Jesus are provided with staying power. The Holy Spirit keeps birthing, empowering, changing, and renewing the church.

We are in a process of asking our Creator and the Lord of his church for help with staying power. We are asking for new thoughts, new energy, new vitality, new creativity, and new emotion came to life by a new in-filling of the Holy Spirit. Just as God brought to life His people, individually and corporately, he continues to do so today.

Invite deacons forward.

We celebrate this feast in the company of the saints, past and present and to come. With them we wait, hoping and anticipating refreshment and renewal. May the Holy Spirit

lead us, guide us, and fill us with power and fearlessness, once again as we discern and vision our future.

(Pass the bread, open it – hold it – eat together)

The Lord Jesus when he was betrayed took bread; when he has given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." So feast on Jesus in your hearts with thanksgiving. Take and eat.

(Eat together)

(Pass cup?)

(Prepare cup, open it – hold it)

"In the same way, after supper Jesus took the cup saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." So ministering in Jesus' name, I offer it to you. Drink this in remembrance that Christ died for you, our neighbors, the whole world, and be thankful.

(Drink together)

Prayer: Almighty and most merciful God, you have called us to sit together in heavenly places at this feast of your love. May we partake of the very life of Christ that He may renew our hearts again. May we continue to be changed into His likeness so that at last He may present us without fault or blemish before his glorious presence with great joy. May we respond to your call to each of us by name, into the abundant deep living we are offered. May we seek out and trust in Pentecost power for our discerning as we listen to your plans for the future of your church here at North Star. Empower us to continue to proclaim, "We have seen the Lord! In Jesus Name, Amen.