

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Pentecost Sunday, May 27, 2012

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 228:1-5, 226:1, 231, 235:1-3, 234.

Lessons: Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:1-41, John 16:5-11.

Sermon Text: The Epistle Lesson and especially Acts 2:14.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The first public witness to Jesus Christ who is named on Pentecost is Peter. The Holy Spirit led many to speak up in many languages, proclaiming what Jesus Christ did for them and for all mankind on that day. But Luke speaks of Peter and quotes his sermon.

This Peter is the same man who at Jesus' Trial before the high priest and the leaders of the Jews denied even knowing Jesus.

Today listen carefully as Peter tells us how

THE HOLY GHOST WITNESSES TO JESUS CHRIST ON PENTECOST

- 1. This is another fulfillment of the Word of God.**
- 2. Peter boldly tells his hearers 'You crucified Jesus, God's Servant, but it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.'**
- 3. *"Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."***

Peter had denied Jesus Christ, and there is probably not a single believer present on this day – and many unbelievers – who didn't know this. We were told that the number of believers before this day was about 120. In such a small group, it is likely that everyone knew what Peter had done.

But it is likely that they also knew what Jesus had done in recognizing Peter's repentance. In fact, John records the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection in these words:

"This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.' Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.' The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'" (John 21:14-17)

Peter had been given the command from Jesus to feed Jesus' sheep – twice – and to feed Jesus' lambs. Now Peter is publicly proclaiming what that Jesus Christ did – not only telling Jesus' sheep about him, but also telling others who did not yet believe.

God used Peter's knowledge and dedication to proclaim the gospel to many others.

Now, on this day, ***"Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.'"***

He boldly speaks up and reminds them of events which occurred just fifty days ago – less than two months. Jesus was crucified, creating quite a stir in this city of Jerusalem. You remember events very vividly that happened just a couple of months ago. Yet today Peter is reminding his hearers that they are the ones who crucified Jesus of Nazareth. That could have been dangerous for him to speak so sharply against those who helped to crucify Jesus. But we must remember that it is all of our sins that helped to crucify Jesus.

But more importantly, he tells them that death couldn't hold Jesus. He rose from the dead.

But before he gets into talking about Jesus, Peter explains that what is happening on this day is fulfillment of the prophet Joel unfolding before their eyes.

What had happened on this day was something really strange. ***"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."*** (Acts 2:2-4)

Many gathered together to find out what was happening. Many had heard the sound of a mighty, rushing wind – but there was no wind. We shouldn't be surprised at that kind of curiosity, for haven't we walked outside when we hear tornado sirens or checked out what's happened after we hear a strong wind?

Then, when many of these who gathered heard many people talking in strange languages, they didn't know what was going on. From Peter's words, we know that some thought these people were drunk and were just babbling. But Peter assures them that is not the case.

In explaining Joel's prophecy, Peter says that these men are not drunk. It is too early in the morning for them to have been drinking.

"No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

What they are seeing and hearing is the outpouring of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, will be poured out on all of God's servants. Then Peter also makes application of the prophecy to things that may not yet have occurred.

How does it happen that the Holy Spirit is poured out on all people?

God offers his Holy Spirit whenever and wherever the Word of God is heard and read and proclaimed. The Holy Spirit comes through the means of grace, the gospel in word and the gospel in the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Luther, in speaking of God's kingdom, teaches us that God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven. In this way the Holy Spirit is poured out on believers abundantly, and it changes their lives, as it did the lives of more than 3000 people on this day of Pentecost.

Believers are like Peter and John, who later boldly confess before the high priest and the Sanhedrin: ***"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*** (Acts 4:20) And so then everyone who believes will then also prophecy, that is, proclaim, tell, speak out about what they've seen and heard.

Then Peter also makes application of the prophecy to things that may not yet have occurred. We have here a very brief reference to 'the last days'. Today we can look at all such references in the Scriptures and realize that all prophecies leading up to judgment day have been fulfilled and that Christ could come in judgment at any time.

Then, after explaining what was happening on that very day, Peter gets into the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

He proclaims ***"And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."***

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

Peter makes a reference to the history of the Jews and says David ***"spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life,***

and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Did you notice that Peter says *"And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"*? He didn't say 'everyone will be saved'. He didn't say that everyone who obeys the ten commandments will be saved. He didn't say that everyone who does good things will be saved. He didn't say that everyone who is a Jew will be saved. He said *"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Just as what you say is important for what you do NOT say, so is the very Word of God. Let me give an earthly example: If I tell my grandson he can have a cookie, it is significant that I am NOT telling him he can eat all the cookies in the cookie jar. And here, too, we must not only proclaim the truth of God's Word, but we must also warn against false teaching.

The audience of Peter – and the audience of all the others who spoke God's Words on this day in native languages that they could understand – was *"God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven."* These were people who knew the Law of Moses and the prophets, which you have learned all point forward to Jesus Christ. Peter clarifies for them what they should have realized from the Law: that they could not obey it perfectly. That is what is necessary to earn salvation: perfect obedience to God's law. Peter then elaborates on *"the name of the Lord"* that will save them. He explains that Jesus Christ died but he came back to life. He is the one who lived a perfect life and then died for all who do not live a perfect life – and that's all of us.

Peter then concludes: *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

Then, of course, we read *"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' 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.' With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.'"*

In this way – all these ways – we see that the Words of Peter remind us that the Holy Spirit witnesses to Jesus Christ on Pentecost.

But in conclusion, we must remember that it was the Word of God, not the personality of Peter that brought men to realize their sinfulness and ask "what must we do to be saved"?

The answer is the same today for all who recognize their sinfulness: *"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."* The Lord God has called you today to repent again, and has even invited you to receive his true body and blood in, with, and under bread and wine in the sacrament of the altar.

We must remember that repentance is a daily thing. And because you have been called to be God's children, live as God's children! Amen.