

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Pentecost, June 4, 2017

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

Hymns: 224, 230, 226:1-5, 229, 234:1-5.

Lessons: Genesis 11:1-9, Acts 2:1-21, John 15:26-27.

Sermon Text: Acts 2:1-11.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do you remember why Pentecost is necessary? Our Old Testament lesson told us. When *“the whole world had one language and a common speech”* the people said *“Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”* But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, *‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’* So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel--because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.” Genesis 11:3-9 (NIV)

When God confused their language and had them speaking different languages, men could no longer easily communicate with one another. Can you imagine if the bricklayer were to ask one of the laborers for more mortar or bricks and he didn’t understand the question? Or if the people mixing the mortar suddenly couldn’t understand the instructions from the supervisor? Or if one neighbor suddenly couldn’t understand what the next one was saying? Surely there would be great confusion.

But you have learned that God wants all men to be saved, and those who have learned of Jesus Christ are to tell others – everyone in the whole world – the way of salvation. And Jesus Christ is the way – the only way to salvation. But there’s that language barrier even today. Not everyone in the world – not even everyone in your own community – speaks the same language, and may not even understand the language you speak.

Today is

PENTECOST – A GROWTH-SPURT FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

- 1. Man’s pride and arrogance made the events of Pentecost necessary.**
- 2. Jesus had promised to send the Holy Ghost, the Counselor.**
- 3. The Holy Spirit made good on this promise and delivered!**

Why does mankind have such pride and arrogance, even today? In a word, “sin”.

The chapter before our Old Testament lesson lists the descendants of Noah. The descendants of Shem, the son of Noah, are named to seven generations. Noah himself lived 350 years after the flood, and a total of 950 years.

So although a long time had passed since the flood, people should have been able to remember God’s goodness to Noah and his family.

But how long – how many generations – does it take to forget the Lord? Haven’t you – and many of us – seen examples that by the time of the grandchildren they have not learned the Word of God which even their parents may have learned as children?

And how about the pride and arrogance of mankind today! Don’t humans today think they can learn, and discover, and even conquer just about anything?

We've sent people into space who have walked on the moon and many people are confident we can send people to Mars, about 50 million miles away.

Mankind has conquered diseases – to the point that sinful mankind no longer fears such deadly diseases as HIV which causes AIDS which once was considered always fatal! And what is the chief means by which HIV is spread? Through sexual contact, through breaking God's sixth commandment!

Of course, as a reminder that mankind is not totally in control of his health and environment, we find diseases such as zika and ebola popping up and spreading.

So although there can be no doubt that men's sinfulness continues today we must realize that sin made the events of Pentecost necessary. Because of man's sinfulness, God found it necessary to confuse the language of mankind. Even to this day mankind struggles toward common language – but we must realize that even in our communities there are a variety of different languages spoken. Even if everyone were to learn one common language, they would still have their native languages and may not ever totally comprehend the nuances of a common language. Many people do not wish to lose their native tongues, and want their children to learn and use those languages.

But even since the time of the tower of Babel, mankind has been able to learn foreign languages – sometimes with great difficulty – so that even the Jews in the Old Testament times could share the good news of the coming Savior.

But now that Jesus had finished his work on earth God sent the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised, to share the good news of the Savior who had come.

In our Gospel lesson you heard John record one place where Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. ***“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”*** John 15:26 (NIV)

One of God's purposes in sending the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, was to immediately spread the good news of the Savior who had now already come and earned heaven for men.

Pentecost was an Old Testament Festival to celebrate 50 days after the beginning of the spring-time harvest. On this day, every male of Israel was to appear before the sanctuary, the temple in Jerusalem. Pentecost this year also happened to be 50 days after Jesus' resurrection and ten days after Jesus' ascension into heaven. On this day the Holy Spirit came. ***“When the day of Pentecost came, [the believers] were all together in one place. 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.”***

The sound of a great wind – but no wind!

What appeared to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them but no one was burned!

We don't know exactly how many people were actually given the ability to speak fluently in foreign languages they had never learned in the normal way of learning foreign languages. But because ***“there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven”*** the followers of Jesus ***“were filled with the Holy Spirit”*** and they proclaimed Jesus.

The crowd was amazed! ***“Each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?’”***

We know from Holy Scripture that at least 15 regions or people or tribes are mentioned. And some of the geographic places are very broad descriptions, such as ***“residents of Mesopotamia”*** and ***“Asia”***. Asia could have included all of Asia Minor – which is now the nation of Turkey, larger than the state of Texas, with a number of different languages possibly spoken.

So on that very day many heard the words of God about Jesus because of the direct working of the Holy Spirit. We have the example of Peter's sermon on that day, which points out that this is the fulfillment of ***“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.” Acts 2:16-18 (NIV)

At the end of Peter’s sermon, we read ***“When the people heard [the Word of God], 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.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”*** Acts 2:37-41

The Holy Ghost gave the followers of Jesus Christ the tool to share the message of salvation with people from all these areas. The Holy Ghost gave believers the ability to speak fluently in languages they’d never known.

But we find more of the working of the Holy Ghost. If Jesus’ disciples had to rely on their memory of everything that Jesus had done and said, they would be sorely out of luck. The gospels tell us that after his resurrection, the disciples of Jesus ***“still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.”*** John 20:9 (NIV) Luke begins the book of Acts with ***“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.”*** Acts 1:1 (NIV) How could anyone remember all those things if they were not written down as the words of the Old Testament were?

The Holy Ghost was working not only on this day, but he even saw to it that the evangelists and apostles recorded all the words of the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation for our learning. Scripture itself tells us that ***“men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*** 2 Peter 1:21 (NIV) Paul writes to Timothy – and for us ***“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”*** 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV)

God the Holy Ghost caused all the Scriptures – from Genesis to Revelation – to be written for our learning. That is another example of The Holy Ghost being sent for the benefit of mankind. In that way, too, the Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. And we haven’t even spoken about the work of the Holy Ghost in the means of grace in our lives and in the lives of men today who hear the Word of God. We confess with Luther that “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 in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers. 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.

May we this day thankfully remember the working of the Holy Ghost also in our lives. May we use that tool, that weapon the Holy Ghost has given us – the printed Word of God always for the glory of God and the salvation of many! Amen.