

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**First Sunday After Trinity, June 2, 2024**

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

Hymns: 232 (233:7) 224, 234, 230

Lessons: Ezekiel 36:22-28; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; John 14:15-21

Text: Acts 2:32-41

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ:

We celebrate three major church festivals in the church year. All three festivals are marked by wonderful miracles. We celebrate the miracle of the virgin birth of Jesus at **Christmas** time. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost and was born of the Virgin Mary so that he could be our Savior from sin. We celebrate the miracle of Jesus' resurrection at **Easter** time. His resurrection is proof of the fact that he is the Son of God, that his heavenly Father accepted his work of redemption, and that we sinners are accounted as righteous. These two festivals are celebrated with special church services. Even the unbelieving world observes these festivals in a secular manner with much commercialism and merchandizing.

But who in the unbelieving world pays any attention to the third festival of **Pentecost**? Who ever heard of any gifts being purchased for Pentecost? For us who believe in Jesus it is a very important festival. There was also a great miracle that happened on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. The Holy Spirit was given to Jesus' followers. The giving of the Holy Spirit is described in these words: *“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. The people who heard this preaching by Jesus' followers were gathered in Jerusalem from many different foreign countries. They said: *“We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”* Acts 2:11. Why that was so important we hear in our text when it tells us of the three thousand people who became believers in Jesus that day.

In our sermon text for this festival we hear the last part of the sermon that Peter preached on Pentecost. From it we want to learn about:

**THE IMPORTANT WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

- 1. He works through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.**
- 2. He works in the hearts of people so that they may be saved.**

In our Lutheran church one thing that is emphasized in our instructions and in our preaching is that the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace. What is the means of grace? It is the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. It is the Gospel Word that you can read for yourself and that you hear in sermons. It is the Gospel Word that is connected with the water in Holy Baptism. It is the Gospel Word that is spoken when the bread and wine are distributed in Holy Communion

The Bible clearly teaches that the Gospel in Word and Sacrament is the means by which the Holy Spirit does his work in our hearts. Listen to what Paul says of the Gospel. *“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ... God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe,”* 1 Corinthians 1:18,21. Because the Gospel Word

is connected with the water in Holy Baptism, the Bible teaches: ***“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life,”*** Titus 3:5-7. Martin Luther calls attention to the Gospel promise given in Christ’s words instituting the Sacrament of the Altar. He writes: *“It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them,”* (that is, that gives forgiveness) *“but the words here written, ‘Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.’”* No one has forgiveness of sins merely because he attends the Lord’s Table. It is the Gospel Word promising remission of sins that makes the Sacrament of the Altar a precious means of grace.

Now let us learn from our text how the Gospel was used on Pentecost so that the Holy Spirit could do his work in the hearts of the people who heard Peter’s sermon. Peter preached: ***“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”*** This Jesus is identified by certain historical facts, which Peter mentions before our text. ***“Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs...”*** ***“You, with help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead”*** v. 22-24. Having stated these facts and adding that the apostles were all eye-witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection, Peter continues in our text with these words: ***“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.”*** This same Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, died, and rose again, and as a true man was exalted according to his human nature to rule at God’s right hand. Peter quotes the words of David in Psalm 110: ***“The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”*** This exalted Lord, Peter said, is the one who sent the Holy Spirit down upon the assembled followers of Jesus on that day of Pentecost. So it wasn’t as some of the people had said when they heard the followers of Jesus speaking in foreign languages: ***“They have had too much wine,”*** v. 13.

Peter in his sermon now concluded: ***“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*** This is the message of the true Gospel of Christ. This message does not tell us that Jesus was merely a good man or a great prophet who once lived on earth as the religion of Islam teaches. So often today, what passes for preaching, is nothing more than man’s wisdom about a mere great man, named Jesus, who was very kind and loving and finally gave up his life for a cause that did not quite succeed. No, the true Gospel teaches that Jesus is ***“both Lord and Christ.”*** That means he is the true Son of God and the anointed One whom God sent to this earth to save sinners. He, as Peter said in his sermon, was proved to be the true God by his ***“miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him.”*** He was also given into the hands of those who crucified him ***“by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge.”*** Jesus wasn’t crucified because wicked men decided that they wanted to get rid of him. God the Father had decided from eternity to send his Son to this earth for the work of redemption. The true Gospel preaching tells all these things and gives this wonderfully comforting message: ***“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. ... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God,”*** 2 Corinthians 5:19.21.

This is the Gospel, which is the means of grace through which God the Holy Spirit works. Now we want to learn that **the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of people so that they may be saved.**

2.

Peter’s powerful preaching of the facts of the Gospel had its desired effect: ***“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 had preached both Law and Gospel. By the Law he showed them their sinfulness, and their terrible deed of killing their own promised Messiah. By the Gospel Peter had proclaimed that this Jesus of Nazareth was their Savior who suffered and died to atone for all their sins. Through the preaching of all the followers of Christ, speaking in the languages of the people assembled at Jerusalem, and especially through Peter’s sermon, the people were

moved very deeply and were filled with remorse. His preaching really hit them! ***“They were cut to the heart.”*** They then sincerely wanted to know what they should do.

***“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.’*** In other words, they were sinners who needed to be sorry for their sins. They were to use the means of grace, the Gospel Word with the water of Holy Baptism. This was also the way to salvation for their children. Peter told them: ***“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*** This is one of the Bible passages we refer to when we practice infant baptism. The Holy Spirit can work in the hearts of little children as well as in grownups. The promise applies also to all that in the future will be called to faith. The Holy Spirit’s work through the means of grace is all-important. Note that Peter did not tell the people that they should make a decision for Christ. People by nature are ***“dead in transgressions,”*** Ephesians 2:5. They are not capable of making a decision to receive Christ into their lives. The means of grace has to be used and the Holy Spirit must create faith in the hearts of people through that means. Jesus told Nicodemus: ***“I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,”*** John 3:5. Only God can convert a person. The Bible says: ***“Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God,”*** Jeremiah 31:18 KJV. It is God who alone can turn us around, that is, convert us. And this work in our hearts is done through the Gospel: ***“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ,”*** Romans 10:17.

Our text concludes with these words: ***“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.”*** That Pentecost Day was truly a wonderful day. The New Testament Holy Christian Church was established by the mighty working of the Holy Spirit. Three thousand people were brought to faith in Jesus through the Gospel used with the water in Holy Baptism. The Bible does not say in what way the water was applied. So we also do not specify just how the water should be applied in Baptism, whether by sprinkling, pouring, or immersing. But we do emphasize that Holy Baptism is a means of grace through which the Holy Spirit creates faith in the heart.

Do we on the Pentecost Festival appreciate what a precious blessing we have in our church? We hear the Gospel preached, the true Gospel, not a man-made message. Not everyone has this blessing. In fact, most people do not hear the Gospel and do not use the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. We have a church where the Gospel of Christ is preached. We have had the opportunity to hear this Gospel. We have been baptized and instructed in the teachings of God’s Holy Word. We today have the blessed opportunity to have our faith strengthened by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel Word. Do we ever ask ourselves: “Why me?” Why me out of so many people who do not have this blessing? Surely it is not that we are better than they are. For the Bible teaches: ***“Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved,”*** Ephesians 2:4-5. It is a precious gift of God. So on this Pentecost Festival we say with the poet:

*“Praise we the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, with them One;  
And may the Son on us bestow the gifts that from the Spirit flow.”* Amen.  
(Hymn 233:7)

Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for June 8, 2003