

SERMON: "PENTECOSTAL PRESBYTERIANS"

TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT GENESIS 11:1-9
NEW TESTAMENT ACTS 2:1-21

June 8, 2025
Day of Pentecost

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INTRODUCTION

Johnny talked last week about the three big Christian holidays – Easter, first then Christmas and then the holy day we celebrate today – Pentecost
I too want to connect the three with a focus on how long we should celebrate each
Answer. Longer than we actually do

Easter ... all the time. Every Sunday is the day of resurrection. We are an Easter people
Christmas ... We don't just celebrate the birth of baby, but who he grows up to be
We tend to frontload things leading up to the big day, think of the Christmas season as December up to the 25th, maybe earlier – after Thanksgiving or Halloween
I for one am more of 12 days guy I celebrate Christmas until January 6, Epiphany

What I am not is a "keep Christ in Christmas" guy. I think that effort misses the point.
The celebration of Christ's birth is not dependent on how the barista at Starbucks or the store clerk greets you, not dependent on the decorations round town
We didn't put Christ in Christmas and we can't keep him there
God put Christ in Christmas and didn't keep him there for long

No, just weeks later the Christ child had to flee for his life, a political refugee
Don't see too many decorations depicting that. I have one and I cherish it

We cannot and need not keep Christ in Christmas. Nor can we do the same with the Holy Spirit and Pentecost. No, Pentecost is just a beginning

We celebrate the Holy Spirit here in this Place for Everyone,
Pentecost as a season, not just as day. I thank Trudy Olson in part for that.
Like her husband Julian, Trudy's fingerprints are all over this place.
She made this stole, also the covers on the music stands for each season

She made the green ones for ordinary time, purple ones for advent and lent, white ones for Easter and for funerals. But about doing red for Pentecost?
She told me up front, "I'm not doing red for just one day."
If you look at our worship planning calendar it just shows up for the day
I told her, "No, we're going to celebrate Pentecost for a season"

PENTECOST AS A BEGINNING

The red music stand covers and other paraments stay up through Summer
We're some Pentecostal Presbyterians here in this Place for Everyone
I like thinking of seasons, not days, not events ... seasons that last
Pentecost is a day, but is a day best seen and understood as a beginning
especially the way the story is told at the beginning of Acts. It kicks things off

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Pentecost was already a Jewish holiday, a celebration of the harvest seven weeks and one day after Passover (guess they have a much earlier growing season than we do here in Iowa). People from all over were in Jerusalem to celebrate. But on this day, the celebration would be bigger

This Pentecost marked the gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift that would keep on giving
This day marks a new beginning. The disciples were told to wait in the city 'until they were clothed with power from on high.' Well, this is it
There was a strong wind and tongues like fire ... And the instant ability to speak a number of foreign languages

That ability came quickly ... but it did not come and go
It propelled them to share the good news that day. It empowered them to do God's will in this story and through all the stories in Acts. Every story in Acts seems to begin with the Spirit providing the direction – go here, do this
And if not that it is a vision or a dream. It is all Spirit driven

That's not just for a day. That Spirit that was given that day is still busy today giving us the ability, like the early church, to do ministry in a way that connects in a language of both words and deeds that people understand
Did you notice the list of all the different peoples who heard the good news?

And how is it that we hear, each of us in his or her own language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphyla, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.

GIVEN THE ABILITY TO ...

The Spirit made it possible for them all to hear in their own language
The Spirit made and makes all sorts of things possible.
Consider the language we've been using in the affirmation of faith ...

The Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life justifies us by grace,
sets us free to accept ourselves and others, binds us together in one body
The same Spirit that inspired the prophets and apostles ...
rules our faith and life, engages us through the Word
claims us in baptism, feeds us with the bread of life
and calls women and men to ministry

And gives us courage to pray without ceasing, witness among all people
(you know Parthians, Medes, Elamites, etc), to unmask idolatries
to hear voices of people long silenced, to work with others
for justice, freedom and peace

That's a whole lot (and it is not meant to read like that's the lot of it)
It is even more than that ... and more than a day full or a season
That is a life time full of the Spirit at work in and through us
giving us all sorts of abilities. A life time full of being Spirit led and fed

The Holy Spirit does not work like Popeye's spinach. It isn't instant
It is consistent, built for the long haul. I've been leaning into that truth big time
as I learned to live with the fatigue and as demonstrated quite clearly last Sunday,
the fog (thank you for your patience and support) of chemotherapy

Two things I told myself starting this journey. One, I would do what I can for myself
what I can for as long as I can – little things like keeping up with the finances
and doing my own laundry. Two, I would listen to my body and rest when I need to
Number two here overrides number one. Like when I decided I could do
the weed-eating. Lesson learned by trial and error

It's been a learning experience, learning what I can (and cannot) do
I'm convinced that the Pentecostal power (even and especially on low and slow)
has been and is giving me the ability to do the work I love and look forward to ...
sharing God's word with you. No, it is not the drama of popeye's spinach
but it is more like the good that comes over time with eating your vegetables

God has given each us abilities of all sorts, sizes and speeds to share God's love
Looking over your life here and now and spread out over time, can you name
those abilities? Something the Spirit has given you, given you the courage to try
Think back to all those things named in the Brief Statement of Faith

SUMMARY

You've probably noticed the card in the bulletin.

We added that because we'd like to ask you to name one or two of your Spirit given abilities. I'm asking you to complete the sentence "The Spirit has given me ...

Fill in the blank. It could be something like what's in the Brief Statement of Faith - Courage to follow Christ's call; to work for justice, freedom and peace

It could be something else – the ability to work with your hands, the ability to sing or play an instrument, to teach, to organize to practice hospitality, to be persistent in prayer for others

Please finish that sentence with an ability or two

And place that card in the offering plate here in a little while

Johnny will look them over quickly and then offer them up in prayer

as prayers of thanksgiving for what the Spirit is doing through you

I'll pray through them through the weeks ahead in my prayers for you

Thank you for filling out the cards

Thank you for all you have done, are doing and will do

And thank God for the Holy Spirit who makes it all happen

And happen for more than just one day with red decorations