

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you... (John 14:26)

If you ask some Christians what Pentecost is, they may look back at you blankly. Of course, some will at least know that it has something to do with the Holy Spirit and tongues of fire. Some will have noticed that the paraments change to red for the day. There are some Christians who might tell you that they were confirmed on or around Pentecost, as is the tradition in some places (like my home congregation). But, Pentecost is all this and more – it is a major festival.

Most Christians don't see Pentecost on par with Christmas or Easter, Epiphany or Ascension. Many might even consider Reformation Day – a *minor* festival! – worthy of more pomp and circumstance. But, Pentecost is one of the primary feasts or festivals of the Church year, and for good reason. It is indeed a celebration of the day that the Holy Spirit came in His fullness to fill Jesus' disciples for ministry and for life in the Church. In fact, it is often said that in a certain way, Pentecost is the beginning of the Christian Church as we know it.

Before his Passion and death, Jesus promised his disciples that, although he was leaving, *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live* (John 14:18–19). Even after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were still not fully understanding what was going on, as Jesus was leaving them again – this time to ascend into heaven to reign at God's right hand. But, Jesus' promise still stood. *Behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high* (Luke 24:49). And stay they did. During their time in Jerusalem – 10 days of waiting – *all these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers* (Acts 1:14). They chose Matthias to replace Judas among the twelve. But, on the day of Pentecost – the Old Testament feast called *Shavuot* or “Feast of Weeks” – the Holy Spirit came, just as Jesus promised, that the “power from on high” might fill them to proclaim the good news of Jesus' resurrection and salvation through repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

God's sending of the Holy Spirit on Shavuot/Pentecost was no accident. Shavuot was a harvest festival and gathering of first fruits, meant to be celebrated by the people of Israel when they came into the land of promise. The Lord commanded that they *remember that you were slaves in Egypt* (Deuteronomy 16:12). But, what God did in Christ was even more amazing and powerful – he saved his people from slavery to sin and death by raising Jesus from the dead! How glorious, then, that as Peter proclaims to those gathered in Jerusalem for Shavuot the full weight of the Law - *You crucified and killed [Jesus] by the hands of lawless men* (Acts 2:23) – as well as the full grace of the Gospel – *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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off* (2:38–39) – that God brings about a harvest indeed. Around 3,000 people are baptized and brought into the Church of Jesus and his salvation!

This year, our celebration of Pentecost recognizes not only that God did this 2,000 years ago, but that he continues to plant, water, grow, and cause his people to bear fruit in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For our 150th, this means focusing on Christian education. As the Holy Spirit comes to us through the Word, God calls us to faith, forgives our sins, gives us new hearts, and causes us to bear fruit in love. This is why the *season* of Pentecost is so long – and should not be overlooked!

-Pastor Squire

“Come, holy Light, guide divine, now cause the Word of life to shine. Teach us to know our God aright and call Him Father with delight. From every error keep us free; let none but Christ our master be that we in living faith abide, in Him, our Lord, with all our might confide. Alleluia! Alleluia!”

(“Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord” *LSB* 497, v. 2)