

## **ACTS 2:1-4, 17-21**

### **BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Day of Pentecost, that's what we celebrate today – the beginning of the Christian Church and the coming of the Holy Spirit. That's the focus of this sermon, and not all those disciples speaking in different languages, but only the coming of the Holy Spirit.

In our text we have the coming of the Holy Spirit enabling the disciples to speak in various languages, and Peter's explanation of God pouring out His Holy Spirit. And then after this we have the second part of Peter's sermon which includes: "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" (2:38).

That's the easier text to use to preach on baptism. It's Peter's exhortation in response to the repentance of the people who were cut to the heart when Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (2:36). That's how next week's text ends. Today we end with, "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 21). Thus we're left asking, 'How does one call on the Lord to be saved?' If we'd only read a little further we'd hear, 'Repent and be baptized'. Yet, we don't read that far today. And yet again, the Holy Spirit is already here in our text.

This can be confusing for many Christians. People are receiving the Holy Spirit apart from Baptism. Thus some deny the simple water baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and they look for this filling with the Holy Spirit that our text talks about. However, when our text talks about the Holy Spirit coming in like a mighty rushing wind, this term is used in only one other place in the Bible, also in Acts, which talks about God giving mankind life and breath, eternal life and the gifts of Christ through faith (Acts 17:24-25).

What we have here in our text is a unique event, and not something that we should look for to be repeated. And yet we do still look for the coming of the Holy Spirit. On a few occasions Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come, and on this day that we read about the disciples were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

For the sake of time we don't read the entire second chapter of Acts on one Sunday, or even over two Sundays, but we really ought to put it all together for the sake of understanding the coming of the Holy Spirit. For the sake of being able to explain about Jesus to all these different people the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and the Christian church was started. The Christian Church was started when the people listening to Peter repented of

their part in the crucifixion of Jesus, and they were baptized, and they received the Holy Spirit – about three thousand of them on one day.

If you can imagine the entire town of Mitchell being baptized in one day, everyone becoming Christians all at once, and then Christianity spreading out from here through the gift of baptism to others, that's what we're looking at – people being baptized to receive the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of their sins for the spread of the Christian church, and not people being baptized with the Holy Spirit so that they could speak in different languages.

This is the mission that Jesus came to fulfill through His life, ministry, death and resurrection, and is now going forth through His church so that all people may call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. This isn't just some sort of strange event from the past, but one with a definite purpose that we take part in. The Spirit works through us – through our faithful, sharing of the Gospel and baptizing people – to grow God's Church. This same Spirit whom we see in our text is alive in our Church today.

People may ask how what Jesus did two thousand years ago can be effective in our lives today. And the answer is that the Holy Spirit is working through ministers to distribute the Means of Grace: God's Word and the Sacraments. Through these means we receive justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone.

Our text looks at the beginning of the Christian Church. For us now we can ask 'What is the Church today?'. How is the Holy Spirit working in the Church today? In our Church we have a big book called the Book of Concord which contains our main teachings. In that book there's a small section entitled "The Ministry of the Church". This is what it says:

"In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel. That is to say, it is not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ that God justifies those who believe that they are received into favour for Christ's sake. As Galatians 3:14 says, "that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

And then it concludes by condemning those who think that the Holy Spirit comes to people without the external Word, through their own preparations and works. I've met those Christians who look for a baptism of the Holy Spirit as our text talks about so that they can speak in tongues, and have some sort of spiritual experience, and they deny that the Holy Spirit comes to people through a water baptism.

Lutherans don't deny that the Holy Spirit could come to you and enable you to speak in foreign languages. We clearly teach that God "gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel." So, the Holy Spirit could come to you in a mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire and enable you to speak in a different language, and yet since this is a rare occurrence in the Bible, and there's no promise of further occurrences, I cannot make any promises to you that the Holy Spirit will do any such thing in your life.

What I can tell you is that beyond sacramental Baptism there is no other God-promised Baptism. As Ephesians 4:5 says, there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism". Also, as the Bible makes clear in many places a proper Baptism is not water only, Spirit only, or Word only, but it's a combination of the Word of God with the water and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8).

Paul also wrote to Titus saying, God "saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:5-7).

That language that Paul used, Peter had also used in our text. In our text Peter had said the God **would pour out** His Spirit, and then he goes on and teaches about Baptism. Paul then later says that God **has poured out** the Holy Spirit through a washing, which is Baptism, because now Baptism has become a practice in the Christian Church.

And yet Baptism isn't a one-time event, once Baptized always saved and you never have to set foot in church again. This justifying faith that's given to us in Baptism isn't the matter of a single moment, but it's the substance of our whole lives. You receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism, and then you return to your baptisms again and again to remind you of what you have received. In a similar way the Holy Spirit comes to you again and again. As our text repeatedly tells us, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us.

And when, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, you call upon the name of Jesus, you shall be saved. That's the importance of our text, that by the grace of the Holy Spirit you shall be saved. Amen.