

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc. Trinity XXIII Sunday Sermon on 2017-11-19

Receiving the Holy Spirit, by Fr Reed Merino

From Acts 1:

Verse 4 `And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

Verse 5 "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Verse 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Verse 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Verse 8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." `

For many, MANY centuries, the question about ordinary Christians experiencing that "baptism in the Holy Spirit" has been side-stepped, deflected, by believing that Pentecost was a "special" event, only for Christ's apostles, who needed special power to be witnesses for Jesus. After all, he did say, "... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me... to the end of the earth."

Based upon that assumption, one common response when that subject comes up is something like, "I am not an apostle, and I don't need the power to do miracles." Another, more clever response, and sanctioned by frequent church authority, is the teaching that "We have ALREADY received the Holy Spirit when we were baptized," or "... when we first believed in Jesus," or "... when the bishop laid his hands upon me at confirmation."

The trouble with all of those teachings is that they cannot pass muster when examining the New Testament in DETAIL. But most church-goers do NOT study the Scriptures in detail, and have no way to evaluate these kinds of arguments. When you are ignorant of a subject, ANY opinion about that subject can be presented in a way that "makes sense," or "sounds logical." Remember, ALL forests look healthy from 35,000 feet, right? With a little creativity, all opinions can similarly sound reasonable to people who do not know and investigate the details of what Jesus and His apostles ACTUALLY taught.

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So, let's look at some Scriptural detail: first of all, to WHOM was the Pentecostal promise given? In Luke 24, we are given the first occurrence of that promise:

Verse 48 "And you are witnesses of these things.

Verse 49 "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Was this promise made only to the 11 apostles (Judas being dead)? NO! In verse 33, we are told that the company spoken to by Jesus consisted of the "eleven AND those who were with them gathered together." So the promise was made to more than the 11 apostles. HOW many more, do you think?

In Acts 1, we are given that answer, in at least a close approximation of it:

Verse 15 "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty),..."

In Acts 2:

Verse 1 "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Verse 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Verse 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

Verse 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit..."

So much for the idea that this Pentecostal event was only needed by the apostles. Other examples make it even more clear:

In Acts chapter 8, we are told how the new Christian disciples in Samaria received the Holy Spirit: and NONE of them was an apostle.

In Acts 10, we are told how the Centurion Cornelius and others received the Holy Spirit: and none of THEM was an apostle.

In Acts 19, we are told how the disciples in Ephesus received the Holy Spirit: and none of THEM was an apostle.

In Galatians 3, Paul mentions that the entire congregation had received the Holy Spirit at the very beginning of their conversion to Christ:

Verse 2 "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

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Verse 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

With all of this clear testimony from God's Word, does it not become obvious to you that this Pentecostal event was designed by God for EVERYone who hears and believes the TRUE gospel of Christ? Are YOU hearing it as coming from God for YOU? Do you BELIEVE that your Creator intends and wants it for you? If you continue to ignore and resist this offer from God, what do you think it says about YOU? About whether God considers you to even BE a disciple of Jesus? Remember, "disciples" have made the commitment to believe, trust, and seek with passion to OBEY the specific teachings of Jesus. If you have not made that commitment, rather than being a disciple, you are still a REBEL against the only REAL God – the God of the Bible, and you are still in unwitting bondage to the god of this world.

From what Paul said to the Ephesians and to the Galatians, the Pentecostal event is something that you necessarily REMEMBER ("Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?", Paul is calling upon the Galatians to REMEMBER their receiving of the Holy Spirit):

If you cannot remember it, it has not yet happened to you.

Do you think it is consistent to think you are a Christian disciple of Jesus, to be pursuing God with genuine passion and for Him to have not revealed to you that He wants you to know the joy of your own Pentecost?

Either He enjoys leaving you in the dark, or you are not yet in the kind of relationship with Him that bears the fruit of eternal life.

Don't you think it is important enough to make SURE of your relationship with your Creator?

If God reveals several steps for you take in becoming united to Him, they must ALL be undertaken:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1: **verse 14**).

"Repent" → discover what GOD thinks of your "goodness" and replace YOUR opinions about yourself with His opinions.

"Believe" → Believe in Him AND in what He has to say. Make HIM have authority over you, like a good child does toward his/her wise parent. Abandon your autonomy to His authority.

"Confess" → His authority to others

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And from Romans 10:

Verse 8 "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

Verse 9 that **if you confess with your mouth** the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Verse 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and **with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**"

And in case you think you can have a "secret covenant" with God, a covenant in which you do not have to embarrass yourself by verbally confessing Him, observe the importance of "confessing" Christ, as stated in John 12:

Verse 42 "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

Verse 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

If you genuinely want your God to grant you this Pentecostal promise, which is also a command, pour yourself into that quest, as stated in Luke 11:

Verse 13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

And while you are pursuing THAT promise, allow God to lead you to what HE considers to be "repentance", what HE considers to be "belief" in Jesus as your personal master, and to begin confessing Him as your master. And if you find that too demanding, then prepare to spend a very long time with someone who hates you with passion.