

God's Deeds of Power

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Year A: Acts 2 and John 20

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

God grants the Holy Spirit to come upon the people to continue the relationship Jesus had with them. Also so they will tell the mighty deeds of God. God's Holy Spirit doesn't come once, it continues to come again and again upon the church.

Beloved of God! Happy Pentecost! Singing.... “Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us. Make us, mold us, fill us, use us, Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us.”

That’s what happened that day! Jesus’ former disciples had seen Him ascend into heaven. They had replaced Judas so they were 12 again in number and were gathered in a house. These twelve began to speak languages they had never spoken before. No time for Rosetta Stone or Duolingo. It just happened!

A Dios sea la gloria!
Gott die Ehre geben!
Soli Deo gloria!
To God be the glory!

Because we know the story, we may be tempted to put the story on simmer, but that’s the exact opposite of what really happened! Listen again to these phrases!

The rush of a violent wind! Bewildered! Amazed! Astonished! Perplexed! Everyone who gathered around the house, upon seeing what was happening to the disciples were also ‘confused, in an uproar, besides themselves, undone, blown away, disoriented, and not comprehending what was truly happening.’
<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/day-of-pentecost-2/commentary-on-acts-21-21-11> The Spirit had come with front burner power, fire, and wind.

Whenever I hear this text, I can’t help but remember a pastor who once said, “Anyone who thinks people can’t be drunk at 9 o’clock in the morning, have never been on a college campus after finals.” Talk about bewildered and perplexed! ‘How did I get here?’

Oh my lanta! The Holy Spirit had arrived and no one knew what was happening! But why? How?

Think about it this way. Many of us might be gathering this weekend for family gatherings and picnics. It is a holiday weekend as we remember and give thanks for the many sacrifices of our military members, spouses and their families.

As the story goes, people had travelled from many lands and nations – some very far away from Jerusalem – to come for the Jewish festival of Pentecost. This festival commemorated the giving of the Law. It took place fifty days after

Passover corresponding with tradition that Moses received the Ten Commandments, fifty days after the Exodus. Just as the ancient Israelites were freed from Pharaoh and slavery, now, God's people were freed from sin and death. The Holy Spirit was continuation of the relationship God had with God's people through the Living and now resurrected Jesus Christ. It blew their minds!

But the text says the people heard the apostles, speaking about God's deeds of power. From the very beginning of the church people have been compelled to tell of God's mighty works. Oh yes, it happened on that first Pentecost. But the work of the Holy Spirit is to build the church up with power again and again and again. This wasn't a 'one and done' as the saying goes. As Rev. Dr. Matt Skinner says, 'this is just the first of many Pentecost moments in the church. God creates new waves of chaos, new opportunities.' (Workingpreacher.org. Sermon Brainwave for Pentecost 2023)

God's power throughout the ages has been revealed in creation, in the church, in people, in communities, in families. When we speak about God's deeds of power, when we share these Holy Spirit stories, we are encouraged in our faith. We are emboldened in our walk with the Lord. We are strengthened in times of discouragement.

Can you think of a time when your mind was bewildered, astonished, amazed or confused at God's power and movement in your life? Can we think of a community where they discerned the movement of the Holy Spirit to bring life, love and new creation? Perhaps the Holy Spirit, this third person of the Trinity, is not as real to you. If this is the case, simply listen in with an open heart.

I can imagine that many of us might be amazed, confused and overjoyed at the revival that is currently taking place in Myanmar. There is a revival happening where many souls are coming to know the living Lord. Former gang members converted to lives of love and service. It is absolutely Spirit led. The church lives again.

We might be perplexed at demonic spirits being exorcised from people in countries on the African continent. Good Lutheran congregations singing for hours while members who are trained in these exorcisms pray over people until their bodies are limp and whole once more.

Closer to home and perhaps easier to understand, we give thanks for churches like St. Christophers Episcopal in El Paso, who decided to convert their Sunday school

classrooms to take care of refugees coming over the border. A few neighbors put up a fight, but they listened and followed.

What about our own church, moved by the Holy Spirit, to give over \$12,000 to World Hunger ministries or buy 333 pounds of food for the hungry in Loveland? That wasn't my doing. It wasn't the Leadership Team calling each of you on the phone. It was God's Holy Spirit moving you – us – to be generous. Any of these occasions are stimulated by God's Holy Spirit bring life to the church and wholeness to God's people.

The Holy Spirit is a continuation of the relationship God had with God's people in Jesus Christ. Our lives are living examples of the Spirit's work among us. Over and over, the Spirit changes, relocates, inspires, provokes, comforts and stirs us to live and work for God.

We see the work of the Holy Spirit when a human stuck in their sin, hears the Word of God anew. Their heart begins to hurt. Then the tears stream down their cheeks. Brought to their knees, they call out to the Living Lord and ask for forgiveness with humility and penitence.

Pentecost wasn't a 'one and done.' God continually calls us, gathers us, enlightens us to where God wants us to work. To what God wants us to do! To go to the people God needs us to go. So that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. The Holy Spirit isn't done yet, Pentecost comes again and again. May we be ready to tell God's deeds of power. Amen.