

Week 41: Pentecost Stories

- Matthias Is Chosen to Fill Judas's Office – Acts 1:12-26
- The Feast of Pentecost – Acts 1:1-13
- Peter's Sermon on the Prophet Joel – Acts 2:14-21
- Peter Calls the Church to Repentance – Acts 2:22-36
- The Life of the Church – Acts 2:37-47

How many believers were gathered?

About 120.

Why had Judas betrayed Jesus?

So that the Scriptures were fulfilled.

Who had prophesied this?

David, in Psalm 41:10.

What does it mean that Judas fell headlong?

Judas hung himself.

Why did his body burst open and his intestines spill out? (See 1 Corinthians 11:27-32.)

As a sign of judgment on the one who had eaten at table with Jesus but who had not believed His words.

What is the fitting connection to the name "Field of Blood"? (See Genesis 4:8-10.)

The story of Cain killing Abel.

What Psalms did Peter quote about Judas?

Psalm 69:25 and 109:8.

Do these passages really support the filling of the office?

No, not by the disciples.

Had Jesus instructed them to fill the office?

No.

Who would fill Judas's office?

The Lord Jesus.

According to Peter, what was the requirement to be an apostle?

He needed to be a man who had been with the disciples and Jesus the whole time of Jesus' ministry from His Baptism to His ascension.

Whom did the disciples propose?

Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.

How did they choose between the two?

They prayed and cast lots.

Who was chosen?

Matthias.

Meditation:

Jesus preached for three years, but there were only 120 who gathered to await the sending of the Holy Spirit. In this world, the Church is often tempted to pursue techniques for successful marketing and tempted to measure her success in numbers. The Church is never to be about marketing or numbers. The Church is identified only by her teaching. The Church is where the Word of God is proclaimed in its truth and purity and the sacraments are administered according to the institution of Christ. So the place of Judas was to be filled by one who was a witness of all the work of Christ, because he would be charged with the proclamation of Christ crucified and risen. Only when they had two candidates who had been examined and met the requirements as witnesses to the work of Christ did they then resort to lots. The disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. But Peter was driven more by his own senses than by the Holy Spirit. He thought it essential to replace the vacant office, but there was not a clear directive from the Lord to do so. Only later, in the choosing of Saul (Acts 9), was the choice of the Lord made clear.

What feast brought people to Jerusalem?

Pentecost.

What was the origin of this feast? (See Leviticus 23:15-22 and the further emphasis on the fiftieth year in Leviticus 25:8-55. Fifty is a number associated with liberty and freedom from slavery as well as release from debts. Pentecost is the English transliteration of the Greek number for fifty.)

The Feast of Weeks, marking the freedom the children of Israel received in the exodus from Egypt.

Who is the "they" of verse 1?

The apostles.

Was there an actual wind?

No.

Why was it a sound? (See Luke 4:37.)

The sound of the Spirit blowing is really the preaching of the Gospel, the great wind that cannot be seen.

What is the wind like? (See Acts 17:25 and Genesis 2:7.)

The wind reminds us of the breath of life at creation.

Why would it be mighty or violent? (See Exodus 14:21.)

The Gospel is the power of God to salvation. The Spirit always brings life to those who believe His words but death to those who will not believe.

Why did the sound fill the house?

The house reminds us of the Church that is filled with the Spirit of the Father.

What appeared over their heads?

Tongues of fire.

Why was it a "tongue" of fire?

The tongue is essential for the proclamation of the Gospel.

Why did the fire not burn? (See Exodus 3:2.)

The Spirit comes to purify and bring life, not to destroy.

What symbolic connections are appropriate for fire? (See Numbers 31:23, Exodus 13:21, and Isaiah 44:16.)

It purifies, enlightens, and warms.

On whom did the fire rest?

The apostles.

Who filled the disciples?

The Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to speak in tongues?

They were speaking actual languages.

Who were the God-fearers?

Gentiles who had converted to Judaism.

What did the crowd hear?

The disciples talking in the various languages of the crowd.

What Old Testament event is the speaking in tongues the opposite of? (See Genesis 11:1-9.)

As the sin of man separated the nations and confused man's languages at Babel, the Christian Pentecost united all peoples and nations through the common language of the Gospel of forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

What is the important question of verse 12?

Whatever could this mean? In other words, what is this peculiar, bizarre, odd preaching all about?

What accusation did some make against the disciples?

That they were drunk.

Why did so many conclude that the apostles were drunk?

The preaching of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins by grace alone and not by works was unlike anything they had ever heard before.

Meditation:

God appointed this festival from the beginning to indicate that the greatest liberty comes when the Spirit of God works faith in Christ. There was a sound of a great wind because the Spirit blows around the world in the preaching of the Word. This sound fills Christ's Church on earth with the news of the perfect liberty in the forgiveness of sins. This Word of God is the fire that purifies us and destroys the Old Adam. Through this fire the Spirit brings light to our sin-darkened world. This is not a Gospel of babbled confusion, but a Gospel that speaks clearly in the intelligible languages of the peoples of the world. There were no interpreters of tongues, for the disciples were speaking in the intelligible languages of those who had gathered. All this is to declare to the nations of the earth the wonderful works of God for us in Christ. Indeed, these works of Christ are the new wine that brings joy to hearts burdened under the yoke of sin's slavery.

Who was the chief preacher?

Peter.

What hour of the day was it?

The third hour (or 9:00 a.m.).

What other important New Testament event happened at the third hour? (See Mark 15:25.)

Jesus was nailed to the cross.

What verses of Joel did Peter use for his text?

Joel 2:28-32.

How does the Lord "pour out His Spirit on all flesh"?

Through the preaching of the Gospel.

What does the reception of the Gospel bring forth in the "sons and daughters" of the kingdom?

They prophesy, or confess faith in Jesus Christ, their Savior.

To what do the visions and dreams of the young men and old men refer?

The hope of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting that faith in Christ gives us. Christians look forward to the day in which they will be raised from the dead and Christ will wipe all tears from their eyes.

Of what do "blood and fire and vapor of smoke" remind us?

The blood of Jesus and the blood of the martyrs, the fire of the Spirit in the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins, the incense of the prayers of the saints that call upon the Lord in the midst of persecution and suffering. The Gospel gives us hope in the midst of the great tribulation of the latter days—the pilgrimage of the Church militant from Pentecost until the Second Coming of Christ.

When was the sun turned to darkness?

When Jesus died on the cross. The time of the church's tribulation in this world will be patterned after our Lord's passion, death, and then resurrection to eternal glory.

Who is saved in the midst of persecution, temptation, and the struggle with sin and death?

Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.

Who is "the name of the LORD"?

Jesus Christ.

Meditation:

The death and resurrection of Christ was the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord, for now salvation is proclaimed for all the nations of the earth. The prophecy from Joel indicates the blessed hope that Christians are given by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of Christ. Though the baptized still struggle with their own sin in a world of misery and despair, though they are persecuted and suffer much at the hands of those who do not believe in Christ, nevertheless they anticipate and confess their firm hope in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. The dreams and visions of Christians are of all these things for which they hope, especially the immortal and glorious eternal life in which they shall forever worship the Lamb. These realities remain unseen in this life, but they are no less real for they rest upon the sure and certain word of Christ's forgiveness. By faith Christians look forward to the day in which they will, once and for all, be set free from the effects of sin. Then all shall have what they previously had been able only to confess by faith. The vision of Christian hope was revealed to the Apostle John by the Holy Spirit and recorded for us in the book of Revelation: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

How does Peter identify Jesus in verse 22?

A man attested by God.

How did the Father bear witness to Jesus?

By miracles, wonders, and signs which the Father did through Him.

Why was Jesus handed over?

Because of the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God.

What had the people done to Jesus?

Crucified Him.

What did His Father do?

Raised Him from the dead.

Who is quoted in verses 25-28?

David.

Where is this quote of David recorded?

In Psalm 16:8-11.

According to verses 26 and 27, from where do we get our hope?

From the Lord who conquered death.

In verse 27, was David writing about himself, Jesus, or both?

Both.

What did David confess in verse 28?

The LORD had made known to him the ways of life.

What happened to David?

He died.

Why did he believe in the resurrection?

God promised David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne eternally.

To where did Jesus ascend?

To the right hand of God the Father in heaven.

What is the right hand?

Jesus' position of authority from the Father to reign over all things for the sake of His Church.

What does the ascension proclaim about Jesus? (See verse 36.)

That He is both Lord and Christ.

What are the four major works of Christ which Peter described in this sermon?

The incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

Meditation:

The work of Christ can be divided into four parts: incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Notice there is nothing in Peter's sermon about the right way to live or how to be a better person. There is only Christ, whose name is the only name by which we may be saved. The Law in this sermon is that Israel had crucified the Messiah whom David had prophesied in the Psalms. In preaching the cross, Peter preached repentance, and in the preaching of the resurrection, he proclaimed the forgiveness of sins. This preaching of Law and Gospel, repentance and forgiveness, is what converted the hearts of the hearers to faith in Christ. This sermon did not call upon the hearers to make a decision for Jesus and did not declare absolution apart from repentance. This sermon sets the pattern for all true preachers of the Gospel until the day of our Lord's return.

What cut the people to the heart?

The Word of the Lord, that they had crucified the Lord and that God had raised this Jesus from the dead.

What did the crowd ask?

What shall we do?

What does their question indicate about what the Word of the Lord had produced in their hearts?

They believed that the Gospel that Peter preached was the truth. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

How did Peter respond to their question?

Repent and be baptized, or believe and be baptized.

What did Peter mean by telling them to repent?

They were to continue to believe that Word which they had begun to believe about themselves as sinners and about Jesus as the Christ. "Properly speaking, true repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror, on account of sin, and yet at the same time to believe the Gospel and absolution (namely, that sin has been forgiven and grace has been obtained through Christ)" (Augsburg Confession, Article XII).

Where did Peter direct the faith of these repentant sinners for the certainty of salvation?

Holy Baptism.

Why is it "be" baptized?

Baptism is not our activity or work, but something that God does for us.

According to Peter in verse 38, what two key benefits does Baptism give?

The forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

To whom does God make this promise in Baptism?

To you and your children, and to all who are afar off.

Who is to be baptized?

As many as the Lord our God will call.

According to verse 39, what happens through baptism?

We are called to be children of God.

How many were baptized that day?

Three thousand souls.

According to verse 42, what did the baptized do?

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayer. (Many English translations have "prayer," but the better translation is "the prayers" and would include the important prayers of the liturgy, such as the Lord's Prayer.)

What is the apostles' teaching?

The doctrine of the Church.

What is fellowship?

Joining together around the Word and Sacrament.

What is the breaking of bread?

The Lord's Supper.

What is prayer?

To call upon God, asking for His help and blessing, according to the promises of His Word. This is the hallmark of the church's liturgy, hymns, collects, and intercessions.

What are the prayers?

The order of service (the liturgy) of the Church. It includes hymns, reading Scripture, preaching, and intercessions.

What did the believers do for each other? Why?

They sold their possessions and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Where did they still meet each day?

In the temple courts.

How did the Church increase?

By the work of the Spirit of God—"the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved."

Meditation:

The recognition that they had crucified the Lord cut like a sharp knife into their hearts, especially because Peter had preached to them from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. Peter then called them to Christ through the waters of Holy Baptism. There Jesus joins us to Himself for the forgiveness of sins and gives us His Holy Spirit. Proper preaching always draws the converted heart to Holy Baptism. Peter repeated the teaching of Jesus that Baptism is for all nations. The promise attached to Baptism anchored their faith in the Word of Christ rather than in themselves or in a decision of their will. The closing verses summarize the life of the Church in this world. The church is a little community of faith in Christ that the Holy Spirit calls together and continually nourishes through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments of Christ. In this fellowship of hearing the Word and receiving the sacraments, the baptized live in mercy and in prayer for one another and the world in which they live.