

Pentecost AM Sermon

Singing: 391:1-4 – 141: 1, 3 (after reading of Law) – 287:1-3 – 255:3, 4 – 417:1-3

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1- 21

Dear congregation,

This day is set aside to draw our hearts together in observing Pentecost.

On that day in Acts 2 the city of Jerusalem was packed with visitors.

For weeks, Jewish people had been pouring into the city.

Many Jews from around the world would make their yearly or life-time pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Some estimate that easily over 10,000 visitors could have been in Jerusalem.

From the east and the west, the north and the south, they came.

Rich and poor; light and dark skinned, scholars, merchants, farmers, doctors, lawyers, tradesmen.

Jews from the mountains of Cilica in coats of goat's hair.

Jews from Africa on camels.

Travelers from Macedonia and Rome arrived by ship and walked to the city from the seaports.

In the early morning of Pentecost, they all filled the streets and thronged the Temple courts.

At home, parents would remind their children about "*Why Pentecost?*"

Perhaps one of the fathers would have said,

"Children, today we remember how fifty days after the Exodus God came down upon Mount Sinai to give His holy law. It was very loud as the trumpet sound pierced the sky. With frightening thunder and lightning, the whole mountain shook. Even our great father Moses trembled exceedingly. May the God of our fathers help us to remember Him today."

Little did those fathers and mothers know that this Pentecost would be so different from all the ones before.

Even less did they understand this Pentecost had everything to do with what had happened about seven weeks earlier.

For most of the crowd, the events of seven weeks before might have been unknown.

That a man named Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified was not a headline anymore.

The threatening disturbances of the days around the last Passover were all quieted down again.

And as everyone was getting ready for the big celebration, it happened. Suddenly!

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

It must have sounded like the approach of an earthquake or the distant roar of a tornado.

This sound must have captured everyone's attention.

Looking in all directions, they might have wondered where it was coming from.

Must we run outside or inside? Where shall we hide?

Or others might have wondered, "How strange to hear this roar but not feel the earthquake?"

The sound of this mighty rushing wind was especially heard in the ears of those gathered in one of the houses near the temple. We read, *It filled all the house where they were sitting.*

Those inside that house were gathered in prayer.

For days already had they been pleading with God.

Perhaps they took turns pleading the promise Jesus left them as recorded in Acts 1:4,

*"And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem but wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."*

One might have prayed, "Lord, send us Thy Holy Spirit.

Fill us with that power we need to spread the good news of Thy Kingdom.

Lord, how long will Thou delay? Has Thou said and wilt Thou not do it?"

Another may have used the ancient prayer of Psalm 80:1,

*"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth."*

And then came suddenly came the answer in a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind.

It was not a destructive, terrifying tornado.

It was the *sound* of a rushing mighty wind.

Yet this 'rushing mighty wind' proved stronger than a real tornado or fiercest cyclone.

Such winds may snap or uproot mighty trees and pick up whole buildings.

But this mighty rushing wind was would change human hearts.

This mighty wind, has been blowing on the earth ever since Pentecost.

It is the picture of the work of the Holy Spirit.

This rushing wind could not be stopped by closed doors or windows.

Borders guards could not keep it out.

It doesn't get stopped by national lockdowns.

Ever since that day, it has also blown far beyond Jerusalem.

It has reached all the ends of the earth.

Sometimes it blows in gales of revivals of churches and communities.

Most of the time it blows gently upon those gathered around the Word, softening their hearts and drawing them to Jesus.

This mighty power of the Holy Spirit has been bending the hearts of hardened enemies.

His power has lifted up the depressed and downcast.

He is still bringing comfort where all men fail to bring comfort.

He is opening eyes for beauties and hope in Christ Jesus.

He is healing lives wrecked and wounded by sin.

This mighty work of Holy Spirit, as pictured in this wind, is not destructive or terrifying.

Instead, it is gentle and yet powerful. It brings salvation.

The Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is the Holy Spirit's special day.

He deserves such a special day in which He is put into the spotlight by the Father and the Son.

God sent angels and a star to mark the Son of God's coming upon earth.

Likewise, God gave tokens to mark the Holy Spirit's coming to this earth.

The Holy Spirit always places Himself in the shadow.

He does exactly as Jesus said, *"For He shall not speak of Himself."*

He does this because His main mission is to glorify the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

He wants all eyes of sinners upon Jesus rather than on Himself.

Yet on Pentecost, it is good and fitting to call attention to Him.

It is good so we may praise Him with understanding.

Thomas Goodwin could have been speaking to us when he wrote about 400 years ago that in general God's saints fail in giving the Holy Spirit the glory due unto Him.

For the Spirit is entitled to receive the same honour and worship as the Father and the Son.

Therefore Octavius Winslow's pastoral direction always remains timely, *"Where the Holy Spirit is honoured, where adoring thoughts of His Person and tender views of His works are cherished,*

*then are experienced in an enlarged degree, His quickening, enlightening, sanctifying and comforting influences.”*

With our mind upon the events of Pentecost, let us meditate upon *The coming of the Holy Spirit* in three thoughts:

1. The love of His coming
2. The necessity of His coming
3. The tokens of His coming

May the blessed Spirit of God kindle within us a sacred flame of devotion.

**First then, let us draw our thoughts together on the Love of the Holy Spirit’s coming.**

Love is God’s essential attribute, *for God is love.*

That means that God the Father is love, God the Son is love, and God the Holy Spirit is love.

Who of us can measure the love of the Father, “*Who so loved the world that He spared not His Son but gave Him to die for His people who were still enemies*”?

How one-sided, how sovereign, how infinite is the Father’s love to His worst enemies!

Likewise, it is fitting to exalt the love of the Son of God.

Though He was God Himself, He made Himself of no reputation. He came in the form of a servant. He humbled Himself to the death of the cross.

What made Him willing to do this? What mind was in Him?

It was His love that exceeds our understanding.

As the Father and the Son love, so also the Holy Spirit loves.

His love and devotion are not less than the Father’s or the Son’s love.

Paul in Romans 15:30 refers to the love of the Spirit when he exhorted the Roman believers, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, **and for the love of the Spirit,** that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.*”

Though He is not expressly mentioned, can we not see Him in Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5? “*And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins ... but God, who is rich in mercy, **for***

*His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.*” This ‘making alive is the Spirit’s work. It was His great love also.

Each year we rightly marvel at Jesus’ willingness to be born in Bethlehem, and to be laid in a manger.

But let’s not fail to cherish adoring thoughts about the Holy Spirit’s willingness to come to this earth.

It is He Who keeps our fallen world in order and beauty! He renews the face of the earth.

It is He Who restrains men and women, boys and girls from evil.

It is He also Who is the Author of every kindness still found.

Yet, He didn’t come just to earth to restrain men from evil and renew face of the earth.

He went deeper. He entered into the most unwelcome of places.

No place is more foul and unfriendly to Holy Spirit than our human hearts.

Yet the Holy Spirit was willing to enter into unholy hearts.

He willingly enters into the hearts of sinner to subdue their iniquity and to beautify them.

As Jesus was willing to live among the groans and grime of a fallen world, so the Holy Spirit is willing to dwell in a fallen heart.

We call a man loving and sacrificial when he is willing to live in the slums to help the poor.

How infinitely more loving and sacrificial is the Holy Spirit!

He comes to live *within the slums and sludge* of hearts that are only evil continually.

And He did so willingly, freely, joyfully, fulfilling His commitment in covenant of redemption.

Oh, meditate often on the Third Person of the Trinity.

His heart is no less warm than that of Jesus, Who died on the cross.

His heart is no less warm than the Father’s, Who gave His only begotten Son.

His hands are no less willing to do His part in work of redemption to the glory of God’s Name.

He is no less loving when He strives with our spirit as Jesus strove with the unsaved.

How gentle and yet majestic is His love when He enters into hearts to make us willing!

It is His love for our soul when He convicts us of sin.

It is love when He opens our eyes for our misery in our condition separated from God.

His goal in convicting is not to make us more miserable or break our spirit.  
His goal is to lead sinners into the arms of Jesus and through Him to the heart of the Father.  
His fervent delight is to draw our affections and incline our will, overcome all bias, prejudice, enmity and unbelief towards God.

Therefore, it is love to our souls that makes Him plead in Hebrews 3:7-8, “*Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts...*”

Oh, my friends, why will you not hear Him?

Why will you not heed Him? What is there in Him that causes you to distrust Him?

Why resist the pricks of your conscience?

Admit that His testimony is right. Admit the sin for which He pricks your conscience is wrong!

Don't resist Him.

Bow your knees and confess your conscience convictions before the Lord Jesus!

Don't fear Him either. Though He is convicting you of sin, He is not out to destroy you!

Let's pause here to sing together from Psalter 255:3-4

**In the second place, let's consider the necessity of the Spirit's coming.**

The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was as necessary as Golgotha.

Really? Is that really true? Was His coming as important as Jesus' death on the cross?

Yet is it and it is easy to forget that.

Remember how in John 15:4 the Savior taught that apart from Him His people cannot bear fruit?

This plainly means that without the work of the Holy Spirit, everyone will remain barren branches.

Without His enabling and abiding no sinner would savingly believe or live a godly life.

Everyone would remain barren in the fruits of faith, repentance and holiness.

No one would be saved.

Therefore, the coming of the Spirit is as essential to salvation as the life and death of Jesus.

Let's look at a few examples of that.

First, the angel spoke to Mary in Luke 1:35? He said, *“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”*

Do you see that it was **the Holy Spirit** Who prepared the Savior’s human body? What an important foundation of the work of salvation this is!

Secondly, it is also the Holy Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead.

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:18, *For Christ also hath once suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* If the Spirit had not done this work, we could not rejoice in the resurrection.

Thirdly, is the work of the Holy Spirit to build the Church of Jesus.

For example, in 1 Cor. 12:12 Paul wrote about the role of the Holy Spirit in gathering sinners, *“for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”*

Oh, congregation, how beautiful is the salvation work done by the Holy Ghost!

Jesus’ ministry opened *the way to heaven for sinners.*

But the Holy Spirit’s ministry is to lead sinners upon ***that way to heaven.***

Jesus in His life and death purchased salvation.

He gave His life as a ransom for many.

But the Holy Spirit applies the redemptive work of Jesus Christ personally to each elect.

How good it is therefore to consider the necessary work of the Holy Spirit on this annual occasion of Pentecost!

Without Him, the beautiful and solid foundation Jesus laid in His sacrifice would remain bare.

It is only through His work that sinners will learn what McCheyne wrote so well:

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,  
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;  
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.

But when free grace awoke me, by light from on high,  
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;  
No refuge, no safety in self could I see –  
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Savior must be.

The best preaching and preacher cannot awaken the heart nor show any the glory of Jesus.  
This work is exclusively the omnipotent power of the Holy Ghost.  
It is His work to bring us as sinners to the Saviour.  
Would any sinner come to the Saviour without the Holy Spirit?  
Would any come to wash their filthy garments in His finished work without the Holy Spirit?  
No, never!  
Without His saving work, none would even see the need to be washed.  
But it also His work to make sinners into saints, to be like the Saviour.  
Only He can truly sanctify, or make us holy.  
Every genuinely seeking soul will experience his or her need for the Holy Spirit.  
Isn't it your prayer already as expressed in these lines?  
Spirit of God, descend upon my heart.  
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move.  
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,  
and make me to love Thee as I ought to love.

This brings us to our **third observation on the tokens of the coming of the Holy Spirit.**

**His coming was accompanied with three special the tokens.**

Each of the tokens are a message or a revelation to us about the Holy Spirit.

First, let's think about the *sound of a rushing mighty wind* in verse 2.

How fitting is the symbol of wind for the Holy Spirit!

We cannot see wind. But you can feel it! And you can see it also but what it does.

It blows your hair blows around or it snatches a piece of paper out of your hand.

Tree branches swing and sometimes even break.



Wind is also sovereign. That means we do not control the wind.  
We cannot decide to make it blow east or west.  
With all our smart technology, we cannot start or stop the wind.  
It is irresistible even though we resist it or hide away from it.

Wind is mighty as well. However, wind in nature is only mighty to destroy.  
It has no power to heal. But the Holy Spirit is mighty to heal.  
Strong wind can break trees and sweep up mighty waves.  
But a much greater power is needed to humble our hearts.  
Think of young Saul of Tarsus.  
It quite likely he was in Jerusalem during this Pentecost.  
He was a student of Rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem.  
Seeing all the people who began to believe in Jesus after Pentecost made him violently angry.  
His hatred to Jesus and His followers was chilling.  
No one could stop this young man.  
He ranted and raved and vowed to kill all the followers of Jesus.  
Yet, it was through the power of the Holy Spirit that this roaring lion turned into a meek lamb.  
The persecutor became a preacher. His hatred of Jesus changed to an exceeding love for Jesus.  
The power of Jesus' Spirit accomplished in Paul's heart what no human could ever do.

Do you struggle with a proud attitude?  
Does it bother you that you can't change your greedy mind?  
Are you discouraged because you can't break that bondage of addiction?  
Are you weary because when you would do good, you find evil much easier?  
Do you find your heart impossible to change?  
Does it bother you that sin does not make you weep as you know you should?

If there was no Pentecost, there would be no hope for such needs.  
But now we know that with God there is power greater than our needs.  
Hear what God promises to us in Proverbs 1:23, "*Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you.*"

Will you turn you at His reproof? Will you turn back to God?  
Get on your knees before Him! Pour out your need before God!  
Take His reproof and open your mouth wide to Him!  
Will you plead His word in Proverbs 1,  
“Lord, Thou promised to pour out Thy Spirit upon those that return to Thee.  
I need thy Spirit to repent; I need Him to bend my will and to incline my heart.  
I need Him to deliver me from the sins that bind me.  
I need Thee in everything. Oh, do as Thou has said, for I am poor and needy.”

The second symbol of the Spirit is recorded in verse 3: “*And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*”

What a fitting symbol fire is to picture the Holy Spirit!  
Fire needs to be kindled. But once it is kindled, it is warm and beautiful if it’s on the right place.  
Fire is also cleansing or purifying.  
I remember how my mother used to first clean a needle above the flame before she would remove a splinter from my finger.

All this is full of important teaching again.  
The disciples were granted this special cloven tongue like as of fire on their heads.  
Just like the wind, this was not real fire, but it looked like it.

But what does it all mean? Why did the Spirit picture Himself in this tongue of fire upon their head?

It was no doubt a token of the new life that lived in each of them.  
Was it also not the fulfilment of what John the Baptist once preached, “... *but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and **with fire.***”

When the Holy Spirit comes to live in your heart, you begin to live a new life.  
This new life is called conversion, or actually, it is better to call it *converting*.

For a person in whom the Spirit really lives is daily converting from ways that are evil.

But why do we need to be *converting* daily? Aren't we *once* converted?

How sweet it would be if we indeed needed to be converted only once!

But the saved heart experiences daily that there is still an old flame of fleshly desires burning within the heart.

The spirit of the flesh and the Spirit of God battle against each other daily, hourly, day and night.

If the Spirit of God would not be living within His people as a living flame of fire or as a spirit of devotion, each believer would fall again and again.

But thanks be to God, Who keeps His people through the power of the Holy Ghost.

But there is more in these cloven tongues of fire as a picture of the Holy Ghost.

Fire also cleanses, right? Fire separates the dross out of the gold.

Again, how needed is that work of the Holy Spirit.

Even the best among God's servants experiences the struggle Paul described in Romans 7.

Paul sighed to be delivered from the indwelling sin that kept rearing its ugly head.

Let us therefore seek the power of the Holy Spirit also. Seek Him in His Word!

One more picture in these flames. Fire can kindle new fires.

The disciples were to go out to preach to all nations.

As they preached, the Holy Spirit would kindle new longings and hunger in hearts to know Jesus.

Therefore this flame of fire was an encouragement to the disciples.

The message they had to bring to their neighbors and nations would never be accepted.

How quickly we are offended when we hear that we are no good even if we are religious or strict!

This message made many hate Jesus so much that they killed Him for it.

Also the message that **salvation is by grace only** is not welcome.

Strange as it sounds, even that message offends our proud natures.

Therefore the 'token of fire' is also an encouragement to preachers.

Let us ask ourselves how often have we resisted the fiery pricks of the Holy Spirit striving with our souls?

Many of us have had impressions or fears that kept us awake or drove us on our knees.  
But what happened to them? Did they bring real change in our heart and lives?  
Or did they go away again like the dew on the grass in the morning?

Where the Spirit is at work to bring salvation, we will actually repent and turn away from the evils we begin to see.

Such turning will not go without huge fights.

Sin doesn't give up quickly. Our hearts are not ready to submit.

We love our idols. We are proud about ourselves.

We think we are not that bad, at least not as bad as others are.

But where the Spirit works savingly, He will win the battle.

If you follow Saul of Tarsus, then you will finally see him with his face in the dust.

When Jesus stopped him, the Holy Spirit bent his proud and stubborn spirit.

It was the Holy Spirit that cleansed that young man from all his thoughts of saving himself by his good works and zeal for the Lord.

It was the Holy Spirit that led him to burn up all his dirty rags with which he tried to cover himself before God.

It was the Holy Spirit that kindled in his heart this one great desire, *Oh, to be found in Him, not having any more of my own being and doing right, but His only.*

Do you recognize this kindling of desires and hunger after Jesus Christ in your heart?

Are you sensing this power of the Spirit through the Word that leads you to make a burn-pile of all your former idols, pleasures, projects, goals, and purposes?

Are you like Ruth, to rather leave even your father and mother, and cleave to the Lord's people?

Are you like those who feel longings within to honour God before men?

To love Him with all your heart?

To delight in His Law inwardly?

If so, you are blessed, my friend, for such flames of devotion and sparks of longing are not found in the dead but only in the living.

And thirdly, there was one more sign. Luke recorded, *“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

This did not mean that they were born again at that moment.

All of them had been disciples of Jesus already.

But now they received what Jesus promised before He left.

He had promised they would receive power after that the Holy Ghost would come upon them.

They were commissioned to be witnesses of Jesus.

They might have looked against that.

For who were they to preach about the Jesus Who was so hated?

And how would they preach in countries with a different language than their mother tongue?

But their worry was needless. Look what happened.

Many thought they were drunk. But they were not, for it was only early in the morning.

Instead, they were filled with power of the Holy Spirit.

Not only did He help them overcome their fear to witness.

He also empowered them overcome the barrier of languages.

They all spoke with a new language they had never learned.

How special to be able to suddenly speak a new language, without practice, without learning lists of new words, and without making grammar mistakes!

And yet, there is more to this token.

It wasn't just to help them overcome the fear how to preach in new areas.

The sign was to tell the whole world that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was not only for the Jews.

The message of God's love in sending His Son and Spirit for the salvation of sinners was also for the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Arabians, British and the Maori.

What a wonderful revelation that is! For when we feel convicted of our sin, many struggle with the question, “Is it for me also? May I believe this message of the Gospel?”

Let such doubts be dispelled by this sign of their speaking the Gospel in our own language.

When the Holy Spirit fills us today, don't expect that all of a sudden you will be able to speak a foreign language.

But we can expect something different.

We will hear something different in your speech.

You will speak in a different way and about different things.

Before the Spirit's work in our heart, we are arrogant and boastful about ourselves.

But when the Spirit comes, we begin to pray like David, "*Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight.*"

Before, most of our prayers were about what we want or like.

But when the saving Spirit of God is present, we pray more and more like the publican, "*Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.*" Or we will cry out, "*What must I do to be saved?*"

Before we could chat for hours about non-sense and waste precious time with looking at You-tubers.

But when the Spirit of God fills our hearts, we avoid such wastes of time and mind.

Instead we much rather fill the evening with speaking or reading about the wonderful works of God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Friends, let us lift up our prayers to God to send forth the mighty influences of the Holy Spirit.

We need His presence to experience God's truths.

Knowledge of the Scriptures is good.

But more is needed: the knowledge needs to become a power to change us.

One former minister once spoke a warning that applies to us today as well.

He said, "Every congregation, no matter how soundly the Word is preached and however much spiritual life is present, is still but one generation removed from apostacy.

This will happen when in a congregation a new generation emerges which no longer know by experience what the power of Christ's blood and the operation of the Holy Spirit is."

Let's these warning words drive us to the substance of the prayer in this closing poem,

Come, Holy Spirit, come, let thy bright beams arise.

Dispel the darkness from our minds, and open all our eyes.

Convince us of our sins, then lead to Jesus' blood;  
And to our wondering view reveal the secret love of God.

Show us that loving Man, that rules the courts of bliss,  
The Lord of hosts, the Mighty God, the eternal Prince of Peace.

'Tis thine to cleanse the heart, sanctify the soul.  
To pour fresh life on every part, and new-create the whole.

Dwell, therefore in our hearts, our minds from bondage free,  
Then shall we know and praise and love, the Father, Son and Thee.

Amen