

Sunday, May 31, 2020

Ready, Set, Go!

Grace mercy and peace to you from God our Father our Father, and from our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. It's Pentecost Sunday and our gospel reading this morning ties nicely in to where we've been as we've gone through the season of Easter. We've looked at the Hope, that assured expectation, or promise from God that we have that is sealed for us through the resurrection of Jesus; and also, was sealed for us by the giving of the Holy Spirit. In the last two weeks, we talked about the coming of the Holy Spirit when Jesus had told His disciples to expect.

Part of that is found in our gospel this morning; John Chapter 7 verses 37 to 39. Jesus stood up on the last day of the feast the great day, and He proclaimed, "if anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink. What does He follow that up with, what is He talking about? He's talking about listening to Him, and then putting trust in Him. And so He continues and says, "whoever believes in me as the scriptures have said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." With these verses we were introduced to the basics of Christian doctrine and coming to faith, the first thing is, the word speaks; in this case the living word, Jesus speaks. What is our role in this? Listen. But then as we've seen in the last two weeks, that's where the Holy Spirit goes to work. It is the Holy Spirit that takes that word and works on our heart and creates faith in our heart. And Jesus says that that faith is going to result in action. Action, living waters, will flow out of the heart of this person. But we have heard about Jeremiah says that the heart is deceitful above all things so we're dealing with a radical transformation here; to go from the most deceitful thing to something out of which is flowing living waters.

Jesus then continues; "now this he said about the Spirit whom those were believed in Him were to receive. For as yet the Spirit had not been given because Jesus had not been born. Now what is meant by Jesus has not been born? That's simply speaking about His resurrection and His ascension into heaven. Both of those bring glory to Jesus because both of those separate Jesus from all religions. It also introduces us to a dilemma that I have many people asking questions about. If it's the Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts, then what about those disciples at that time? Did they not have the Holy

Spirit? Did they not have faith? Because John wrote, for as yet the Spirit had not been given. The answer is very simple. Yes, they had faith; yes, they had the Holy Spirit. All the Old Testament greats had faith. They had the Holy Spirit working faith in their hearts. This is where now Pentecost is literally opening a whole new chapter in God's plan for us. This is where we turn to that verse that we looked at last week, where Jesus right before He ascended into heaven, told His disciples, 'go back to Jerusalem and wait, and the Holy Spirit will come on you with power.' Here's the difference. The Holy Spirit went all the way back to the garden of Eden; was alive and well and working faith in the hearts of those who put their faith, hope, and trust in God for their Salvation.

Now the Holy Spirit is going to take on a new battlefield, Roman society. When you look at Acts 1, verse 8 we see Jesus cultivating the field for his disciples because when He says, 'return to Jerusalem and wait. It's a call for obedience. And they pass the test. They return to Jerusalem which was not their hometown. The majority of them were from Galilee, from Capernaum in particular. Secondly, when they returned; we read they were all in one accord. Now having unity like that is very special. It's what Jesus had called them to do and to be, is uniform. It also shows that they understood what Jesus said because they had a purpose. They devoted themselves to prayer and we see that it is a diverse group. Not diverse by today's standards, which wants to ignore God's word and you know it take in everything and everybody that embraces any sort of lifestyle they want. No, we see it was diverse because we read that the 11 apostles were together with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers, about 120 people. So, this is a diverse group. The disciples prepare, they realize Jesus had chosen 12. Jesus chose 12 there was probably a need for 12. It's also very symbolic going back to the Old Testament and the 12 tribes of Israel. And so, they chose a twelfth. Why were they doing all of this? Jesus said return to Jerusalem and wait there for when the Holy Spirit comes. For He will come with power. And that's exactly what we see in our reading this morning. "And suddenly, there came from heaven; this is directional. Okay, it's much like if you were here in Lodi, if you are downtown, you can hear a train coming before it ever gets here; and you can hear exactly what direction it is coming from. When this sound; this sound is coming from heaven straight down. They hear it coming. This sound was like a mighty rushing wind; keyword like. It was not a wind. It was just the sound of a

tornado coming down from heaven, they heard it coming, and it hits. It's powerful, it's not a little breeze sound.

With it we begin introduction into some real neat word play. First off wind; in the Hebrew language it's *ruach*; it is translated as wind, breath, spirit. We see it all coming together in Ezekiel chapter 37, that kind of bizarre scripture where Ezekiel is taken by the Spirit and shown this Valley of "very dry bones." It appears that it's an old battlefield that is filled with corpses that have rotted and there's nothing but very, very, dry bones left. The Holy Spirit says to Ezekiel, "I will cause breath to enter you and you will live." Now He's speaking to the dry bones. This is what the Spirit said, but notice it's literally saying, 'and the spirit told Ezekiel to speak to dry bones and said, I will cause breath or spirit to enter you and you will live.' But then continues, this breath will come from the four winds, the Spirit will come from the four winds and breath on these slain, that they may live. Coming from the four corners of the earth; the four corners of the earth is known as the four foundations of the earth. What is the foundation of the earth world? It's God holding it up. It's God who created it, and so from heaven, from God comes this Spirit, this wind, this breath, that brings life to that which was dead. And the spirit continues and says; "I will put my spirit in you;" speaking to those dry bones will put my spirit in you. There is huge thing there for us, a lesson for us in terms of again basic Christian doctrine. It is God who puts His Spirit in us. It's not us putting the spirit in, it's not us accepting. It is Him doing.

This is very dichotomous in nature. First of all, yes, it's speaking about Pentecost, how those were dead in sin, disciples which live for Him being powered by the Holy Spirit; but also speaking of judgment. When these bones will be raised and given new life and live with him forever. And so, on that Pentecost, when this sound, this mighty sound comes down from heaven like the sound of a tornado, and it comes down on this house, we read it filled the entire house where they were sitting; they were not active. They were just sitting, and it divided tongues, as of fire appearing to them and resting on each one of them. Now Luke kind of picks up on the Hebrew idea here and he begins a little word play. He's very well educated. But let's remember really what's happening here; this is the work of the Holy Spirit. In 2 Peter 1:21 we read that; "for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of men, but man spoke for God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. So, Luke, filled with the Holy Spirit is writing and he makes this great comparison. He uses tongues,

speaking, and utterance. Three unique words that involve the mouth. They “began to speak,” next, “as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance,” and “this coming of the Spirit appeared like tongues, again “as a fire.” Like because they weren't fired because it did not burn them. This triple emphasis to speak utterance, tongues, three, Trinity, God. It's God coming to their mouths. That's probably where those tongues came to rest. As a sign to the disciples that God's word was to come out of them. This is God at work through their mouths and the message is speak and speak they did.

As we read, now they were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. That's because this is the second great feast. Pentecost is 50 days after Passover. Jerusalem was packed and at this sound, that sound came down, went out, and all Jerusalem heard it. And we read the multitude came together and they were bewildered because there was the sound of the wind, but there was no wind. And each one was hearing them speak in his own language. Now you heard the whole list there of all the different people from all around the world for heard. And they heard in their own language and they said how can this be? Are these not Galileans? But this is not a compliment, this is them saying, aren't they all those guys from the North, without real educated, a bunch of fishermen? And they continued saying, how is it we hear each one of us in his own native language? The message here being given by God, through the Holy Spirit is, this Gospel is for all of you. For Meads for Persians, for Romans, for Jewels, for Gentiles. It's for everyone. And we read; all were amazed, perplexed and they asked, what does this mean? They were seeing a miracle, and they want to know; what's this all about?

Enter something that we still have to this day. I remember being at a pastor's conference, I forget the name of the gentleman who spoke about this. It's a certain kind of people. He called them joy suckers. They suck the joy out of every moment. They suck the joy out of ministry, and here they suck the power away from what is happening, and they say, ‘they are filled with new wine. In other words, they're drunk. I want you to think of the absurdity of that. Since when does someone who's drunk, become fluent in other languages? They usually lose their fluency in their own language. So, it's just absolutely ridiculous.

It's what I like to call the MBBS syndrome. The man born blind syndrome. Back in the gospel of John, there's a man born blind, Jesus heals him, and when the religious leaders, the joy suckers, hear of it, they tell this man 'give glory to God.' We know that this man is a sinner. That man comes back and it gives one of the most profound statements there is to these religious leaders. He said, well this is an amazing thing. You do not know where He comes from and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone has opened the eyes of a man for a blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. You see the blind man saw the truth. This was God in action. He saw Jesus as God. The religious leaders discount him. Just as those who saw these disciples speaking in every language wanted to discount the work of the Holy Spirit. I want you to think about what Jesus says the unforgivable sin is. It's the sin against the Spirit. To deny what the Spirit was doing. And what we have here, it's a very unique situation, something was going to grow that day in the weeks to come.

The field was set that day. It's not a baseball field, or a football field, it's a field for harvest and in that field of harvest you have the people of Jerusalem, and they are filled with the spirit, they are filled with a spirit, an evil spirit. And you have the disciples who are filled with the Holy Spirit. There is a battle about to ensue, and that's why the sermon is titled; Ready, Set, Go!

Because we're going to see those disciples go. Go into battle, go into the field, and go to work with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome to the book of Acts, one of the most exciting books in the Bible. And in the weeks to come, we are going to follow those disciples, just as Jesus said, as they begin in Jerusalem, move out into Judea, travel to Samaria, and continue on to the ends of the earth. Now they have the Holy Spirit, it's been working faith in them and those who were the Lord's servants before them. But now He has come with power. Power that will transform. Power that will change hearts. Power that will lead to God's glory and to the salvation of souls.

In our Savior's Name, Amen