

Sermons at
First Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Reggie Denton, Pastor

May 23, 2021 (Day of Pentecost, Year B)
Acts 2:1-21

In our reading from Acts, from the actual DAY of Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit was given like a rushing wind and like tongues of fire, and the church was given birth, there's a verse that's always amused me. After observing the disciples, some of the people sneered and said, "They're just filled with new wine." We are so suspicious of the Spirit. As if Pentecost COULD have been nothing more than a drunken stupor.

I'm reminded of a pastoral intern I heard about who was nervous about giving his first sermon, SO nervous that he could hardly speak. He asked his supervisor, "How can I get myself to relax?" His supervisor, a veteran of the ministry, said, "Well, this Sunday it might help if you put some vodka in the water glass instead of water. After a few sips, you'll be relaxed and everything should go smoothly." Sunday came and the intern did as his supervisor suggested. Everything SEEMED to go very well, at least to HIM. After the service, he asked his supervisor how he'd done. He replied, "Just fine, except there are a few things you should remember for addressing the congregation: Next time, SIP the Vodka, don't gulp it. There are 10 Commandments, not 12. There are 12 disciples, not 10. David 'slew' Goliath, he didn't 'kick the ever-loving snot out of him.' The Cross is never to be referred to as the 'Big T.' We don't refer to our Savior Jesus Christ and his Disciples as 'J.C. and the boys.' And we don't refer to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as the 'Big Daddy, Junior, and the Spook.'

That's all SOME thought of PENTECOST. Even as wonderful and miraculous as THAT DAY was, we can dismiss it as mere drunkenness, or coincidence, or chance. We're suspicious of the what the Holy Spirit does.

Well, let me give you a picture of what a SPIRIT-FILLED church looks like. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter gave THIS little sermon about Jesus, and what happened NEXT was the DREAM of EVERY pastor. It says, "When the people heard this, they were CUT to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers what shall we do?'" Peter replied, "Repent and be BAPTIZED EVERYONE of you." And they DID, and it says that 3000 people were added to the church on that day – EVERY PASTOR'S DREAM.

In less than 100 years, the fire of the good news of Jesus Christ was carried as far as Spain to the west, India to the east, and Ethiopia to the south. In just a FEW hundred MORE years, the Word spread to the northern reaches of Europe. Down through the centuries, the FLAMES of the Spirit burned brightly. The Christian faith GREW, because people who came to Christ had their LIVES CHANGED.

By the time the Gutenberg Printing Press was invented in the fifteenth century, the Bible, at least in parts, had been translated into 33 languages. Only 200 years later, that figure had DOUBLED to 67 languages. By the first half of the 20TH century, the Bible, in whole or in part, had been translated into 900 languages. Today, there are around 2000 languages and dialects into which at least SOME part of the Bible has been translated.

You might have seen this on Facebook sometime. Check this out.

Show video "How To Explain What You Do, When You're A Pastor"

The church is the most amazing organization in the world! THIS is what a SPIRIT-FILLED church LOOKS like. And we LUTHERANS are part of that. Some might say that an EVANGELICAL Lutheran is a contradiction in terms, like military intelligence, but it ISN'T. We ARE evangelical, FILLED with the Spirit. We are the EVANGELICAL Lutheran Church in America, the ELCA. The Spirit

was given to EVERY ONE of us in our baptisms, and if you haven't heard it by now, let me say it again: the HOLY SPIRIT CHANGES LIVES.

Now, there are MOMENTS in life that CONFIRM that something TREMENDOUS has taken place. One of those moments for teenagers and their parents is when mom or a dad gives them the keys to the car for the first time for a solo run. What a transitional moment THAT is! It's a step of GROWTH for the teenager, because they recognize that they have been given a great responsibility. It's an ADULT responsibility. They also realize that this is something they need be CAREFUL with, because great TRUST has been put in him. Teenagers need to PROVE to their parents that their faith in them is justified.

Today, we at First Lutheran are recognizing OUR newest drivers, who've TAKEN that next step. We may LOOK at them, and STILL see the CHILDREN they once were, but EVERY time we give them the keys, we SEND them into the world, as ADULTS. It's time, and we believe in them.

At Pentecost, Jesus did something SIMILAR for His disciples. By sending the Spirit, Jesus GAVE them the power to DO what he said: "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you." Jesus tosses the keys to the KINGDOM to His disciples. He SHOWS them that He ACCEPTS them as His followers, that He's ENTRUSTING to them the message of the gospel. He gives them a great privilege. He's SHOWING them that He BELIEVES in them.

And he believes in YOU. YOU are the church. YOU are the disciples now, and the Spirit is WORKING in your life.

We are FILLED with the Holy Spirit. We are ready to TELL our story to the ends of the earth, in whatever WAY we can. We'll even CALL God "Big Daddy, Junior, and the Spook," if THAT'S the language someone needs to hear.

We're NOT drunk. It's not the WINE talking; it's the HOLY SPIRIT. We are EVANGELICAL LUTHERANS, and TODAY is PENTECOST! Amen.