

Pentecost 2020

"God's Moving Day"

Text: John 7:11-16, 37-39

On this Pentecost Sunday, may each of you recognize and ever more appreciate the fact that God the Holy Spirit has chosen to take up residence in your heart. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Are you continually amazed by your physical senses? Do you wake every morning is awe of the fact that you can see, smell, taste, hear, and feel? Probably not. Why? It's not because those gifts aren't incredible. They are. Every single one of our senses is astounding in its complexity. Your eyes, for example, are mind-bogglingly amazing creations. Your irises (the colored parts of your eyes) regulate how much light enters your eyes by automatically closing or opening your pupils. The light that is allowed to enter then passes through your corneas or lenses, and the image is projected onto the retinas at the back of your eyes. Several problems here. First, your retinas are not flat, like a projector screen, they are curved. Second, the image that is projected is inverted (upside-down). In fact no "image" is actually projected, at least not in the way we would think of a movie screen. What is projected is just data in the form of light. The retina's job is to take the light that is focused on it and to transmit that data through the optic nerve to the part of the brain designed to receive and interpret that data. The brain somehow knows not only how to interpret the data it receives from the retina, but to invert that data (so we "see" it right-side up), to do it all in color, and to do it as close to instantly as can be measured by man. The result is that we "see." And by random chance this just "happened"?

All of our senses are like that – superb, amazing, finely tuned and incredibly complex systems. So the fact that we are almost never amazed by them isn't because they aren't amazing. It's because we've learned to take them for granted. We aren't amazed by the miracle of sight because we've always been able to see. It's the same with all of our senses.

The same phenomenon applies to the event we celebrate on this day: Pentecost, and the special sending of the Holy Spirit into God's New Testament Church. The correlation is that it isn't the gift of the Holy Spirit itself that is anything less than amazing; it's the fact that we have learned to take it for granted, or to misunderstand it.

This morning our goal is to examine Pentecost in greater detail, the event we can characterize as "God's Moving Day" – the day that God the Holy

Spirit changed his residence. Our goal is first to learn more about this special gift, and thereby to learn better to appreciate just what we have been given, what is even today ours. The text that will form the basis for our study is found in John's Gospel, the Seventh Chapter:

^{ESV} **John 7: 11-16, 37-39** *The Jews were looking for him (Jesus) at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" ¹² And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." ¹³ Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him. ¹⁴ ¶ About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵ The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" ¹⁶ So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me... ³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Here ends the very Word of God. Simply reading words without thought or contemplation may hold some benefit, but we can be absolutely certain that *studying* God's Word *with contemplation* will surely afford great blessing, comfort, strength, and growth. With such confidence then, both in these Holy Words and in God's promise to bless our study of his Word, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth. Amen."**

It's unsettling to realize that for at least the first 30 years of his life, many members of Jesus' own family didn't believe in him. Earlier in this same 7th Chapter of John's Gospel we read, **Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. ³ So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴ For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵ For not even his brothers believed in him.** (John 7:2-5) What his family members were evidently saying to him was, "If you really are something special, why stay here in back-water Galilee? Go to the big city and prove it there." Again, they didn't encourage him to go to the festival mentioned in our text because they had faith in him but as something of a taunt, a dare. He ended up going to the festival, but not as some sort of "coming out" gesture, but because he had work to do – a message to proclaim and work to complete so that he could return to

heaven and send the Holy Spirit. "God with us" wasn't enough. We needed "God in us."

Note in our text how carefully Jesus crafted his statements, always leaving room for puzzlement on the part of those who neither knew nor believed in him: **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" As with so many of the other statements Jesus made prior to Holy Week, his enemies could make neither heads nor tails of exactly what Jesus was saying. They had an idea, but how silly they would have looked in court if they tried to condemn a man for offering a drink of water. The same when he said things like, "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days" and "No sign will be given to this generation but the sign of Jonah."** More to the point, because they didn't understand his words, his enemies could not use them to condemn him.

Jesus' relatives needed a change of heart and mind, as did the Jews in Jerusalem. At one time in the past, so did we. The popular opinion concerning Jesus coalesced at this point in his ministry into two positions: he was A) a **"good man"** or he was B) a blasphemer and **"one who leads the people astray."** Interestingly enough, both positions were dead wrong, and yet this is pretty much the same two positions that have always been offered by society regarding Jesus – right down to the present. To the world he was a good guy or he was a fake.

A change had to take place for souls to be brought to true, saving faith, and Jesus knew that there was really only one sure way for that to happen: Pentecost – the event we celebrate this morning. God *with* them wasn't enough. It needed to be God *in* them. Note these words again from our text: ***On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.***

The people needed that special outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was given on Pentecost. Yet the great gift of Pentecost was not just that the Holy Spirit would visit (he had always done that) but that the Holy Spirit would take up residence in their hearts. This had not happened before Pentecost because the Holy Spirit could not live in the heart of man, could not be poured out, unless and until Jesus fully completed his mission and returned to the glory of heaven. Later in the 16th Chapter of this same

Gospel of John, Jesus said: ***"But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment... ¹² ¶ "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."***

That is exactly what Pentecost is all about, and why we would do well to cherish this day as one of the greatest gifts God has ever given to his Church, and to you and me individually.

Not even the chosen Apostles really got Jesus prior to Pentecost, not even after they had spent three years at his side, hearing his words and seeing his miracles. His own family lived with him for three decades, and even they could not grasp the real significance of exactly who he was and what he was doing. Some acknowledged that he was the Promised Messiah, but even they were confused as to exactly what that Promised Messiah was sent to do.

This is why this event is so important to you and me. This is why we need to understand it and why it is so fitting to thank our God for it continually. You and I needed to have our hearts and minds *changed*. We couldn't do that on our own. We *still* can't do that on our own. Without the Holy Spirit, *who now lives within us*, we wouldn't understand Jesus any better than his enemies, let alone his Apostles or family members. Our options would be the same ones available to every unbeliever, then and now: a good man or a deceiver of the people. That's it. What's more, both ideas about Jesus would damn us eternally. Obviously no one gets to heaven by believing that Jesus is a liar and fraud. But no one gets to heaven by regarding him as just a good man either.

Saving faith means that we believe everything he says about himself. It means that we trust that when he died on the cross he satisfied our sin

debt and washed us clean in God the Father's sight. Saving faith means not that *we* are good, but that we believe that Jesus was good. It means that we place our hope and confidence in the fact that God credits Jesus' goodness, his perfection, to us, and we can only believe something like that *when the Holy Spirit creates such trust or faith in our hearts*. As prone as we are to wander, and to believe what is not true, we still need that Holy Spirit living in us and working through his Word in our hearts on a daily basis.

Do you then understand the value of Pentecost? No Holy Spirit, no faith. No faith, no salvation. It's that simple, that desperate.

Jesus knew us, *knows* us – collectively and individually. That's why he said that it was actually a good thing for us that he was leaving. *We needed the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost even more than we needed to walk side by side with Jesus on a daily basis*. Think of the significance of that fact for a moment. As great as it would certainly be to have Jesus visibly walking among us today, *the gift of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts on Pentecost is even greater*, even more amazing and necessary.

Look finally once again at the end of our text and the declaration Jesus made there: **"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"** That's what changed at Pentecost, and that's why the Christian Church was transformed from just a handful of terrified and confused souls, hiding behind locked doors, to thousands, and then tens of thousands, and then millions. Prior to Pentecost, the Holy Spirit visited man. From Pentecost on, he *lived in man*. That's why Jesus in our text quoted the words that he did: **"Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."** God chose to grow and expand his Church through human beings, and human beings could only carry out this most sacred work because the Holy Spirit was sent to reside in their hearts. That's why you and I are still here, isn't it – so that the mystery of the gospel may flow from our changed hearts and minds. That's exactly what the **"rivers of living water"** are. They are our sanctified Christian words and actions, which are the means the Holy Spirit uses to enter and change other hearts, other minds. Jesus himself has commissioned us to fill this absolutely vital, life-changing role. Pray each day that the Holy Spirit, who because of the gift of Pentecost lives now within you as he does, would fill you with the love and courage necessary to carry out the work he has given you to do. Pray that such **"rivers of living water"** would flow also from you. Nothing else in life could ever compare to such service, such life-changing work. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Numbers 11:24-30** So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. ²⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it. ²⁶ ¶ Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." ²⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, "My lord Moses, stop them." ²⁹ But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" ³⁰ And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

^{ESV} **Acts 2:1-8, 12-18** When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ ¶ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." ¹⁴ ¶ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Pentecost Sunday – May 31, 2020

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 226 (Verses 1-5) *(Red Hymnal)*

"Come, Oh Come, Thou Quickening Spirit"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The Old Testament Lesson: (Numbers 11:24-30) Since we hear much about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the *New Testament* Church at Pentecost, it is good to be reminded that the Spirit was also given, in special measure and at special times, to Old Testament believers. Our first lesson tells of one such occasion in the Old Testament where some of the Jewish leaders in Moses day were visited by the Spirit.

Psalm 91 (Supplement page 33) *(Brown Hymnal)*

The New Testament Lesson: (Acts 2:1-8, 12-18) This is the account of the event we celebrate this morning – the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Though the Holy Spirit was obviously also at work in the Old Testament, He was given to the New Testament Church in a very special way at Pentecost. Note that the speaking in a different language was a special, visible sign that proved that the special outpouring of the Spirit had occurred. It represented neither the gift itself nor the greatest aspect of that gift.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 227 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Come Holy Ghost, in Love"

The Sermon – Text: John 7:11-16, 37-39 *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

"Pentecost – God's Moving Day"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 224 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord"

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn - 226 (Verses 6-7) *(Red Hymnal)*

"Come, Oh Come, Thou Quickening Spirit"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (22) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – St Luke's of Lemmon has called Professor John Ude. Redeemer of Bowdle and Zion of Ipswich have called Pastor Paul Tiefel. Teacher Neil Bernthal has returned the call to Immanuel of Mankato. Teacher Dan Barthels has returned the call to Redeemer of Cheyenne, WY. Teacher Quinn Sprengeler has returned the call to Holy Trinity of West Columbia, SC.

Holy Communion – Due to health considerations, communion service has been suspended until next month. The decision on when to resume will be made at the next Council meeting on June 14. If members would like to see an earlier resumption, please make your wishes known to a Council Member so that a special meeting can be called prior to June 14. Private communion is always available upon request, at the location of your choice.

Confirmation – Confirmation has resumed and is scheduled to continue until the completion of the study of the Catechism. Confirmation of 2nd year students will follow, date to be determined.

Daily Rest Meditations – Subscriptions to the CLC publication "Daily Rest" were renewed earlier this month. That means that if you currently have a subscription, it was renewed. Cost is \$15 for the year, which includes four editions sent out quarterly. Payment can be marked "Daily Rest" and placed in the offering box.