

Pentecost – Spirit, Proclamation, Community

Thomas Robinson, *The Ways of the Holy Spirit* 6, Pentecost, June 4, 2017

Acts 2:1-47

The Sudden Coming of the Holy Spirit

¹ 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 staying in Jerusalem devout **Jews** 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**? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians – we hear them telling in our own tongues the **mighty works of God**.”

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**.”

Peter’s Proclamation of What God is Doing

¹⁴ But **Peter**, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “People of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, you need to know this. Listen to what I’m saying. 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 described through the prophet Joel**:

¹⁷ *“In the last days, **God declares**, I will **pour out my Spirit on all flesh**, I and your **sons** and your **daughters** shall prophesy, I and your **young people** will see visions, I and your **old** will dream dreams; I ¹⁸ even on my **servants** both male and female I in those days I will **pour out my Spirit**, and **they shall prophesy**. ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; ²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹ And it shall come to pass that **everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**”* [Joel 2:28-32]

²² “People of Israel, listen to this: **Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you from God** with powerful deeds and wonders and signs that **God did through him** in your midst, as you yourselves know – ²³ this Jesus, in the definite purpose and foreknowledge of God, delivered up through lawless men, you killed by crucifying him. ²⁴ **God raised him up**, loosing the painful grip of death, because it wasn’t possible for him to be held by it.

²⁵ For **David** says looking toward him: *“I saw the Lord always before me, I for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; I ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; I my flesh also will dwell in hope. I ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, I or let your Holy One see corruption. I ²⁸ You have made known to me **paths of life**; I you will fill me with gladness with your presence.”* [Psalm 16:8-11]

²⁹ “Brothers and sisters, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that **God had sworn with an oath** to him that he would set one of his descendants on **his throne** [Psalm 132:11], ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about **the resurrection of the Messiah**, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² **This Jesus God raised up**, and of that **we all are witnesses**. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the **promise of the Holy Spirit**, he has **poured out this** that you yourselves are seeing

and hearing. ³⁴ For **David** did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, *“The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, ³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.’”* [Psalm 110:1]

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that **God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.**”

The Response of the People

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, **what shall we do?**”

³⁸ And Peter said to them, **“Change your way of thinking and acting and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”** ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Let God save you from this twisted generation.”

The Creation of a Community of Followers of Jesus

⁴¹ Those who **accepted his message** were **baptized**, and about three thousand people were added to the community that day. ⁴² And they devoted themselves to the **apostles’ teaching** and the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and the **prayers**. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

⁴⁴ And all who **believed** were **together** and had **all things in common**. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people.

And **the Lord added to their number day by day** those who were being **delivered**.

What is God Doing?

Acts looks back to Pentecost - a remarkable beginning. Not careful planning and strategy.

Not insight by Apostles. Yes, they were prepared by Jesus. But they were carried along by God’s intervention. God waited till Pentecost for the meaning of the feasts. Passover: deliverance. Pentecost: Covenant, Community, Giving of Torah - God breaking in.

God intervenes in power and symbol in the language of Israel’s story: ‘Wind’ of creation, ‘Fire’ of Sinai. Human voices. Understanding. Babel is reversed. A light to the nations.

What does it mean? Peter quotes from Joel 2 – God’s promises to Abraham and David expand to new fullness, inclusiveness in God’s Spirit. Men - Women, old - young, even slaves are included. All can call on the name of the Lord to share this new Exodus, Sinai.

What has God Done?

God’s actions were present in human Jesus. You know it. But we were blind, self-destructive.

God’s people joined pagans in killing Jesus, nailing him up. But in God’s longer story, he was taking human sin, betrayal, injustice, abandonment, pain, death into himself.

God raised him up. Death holds everyone! But he broke death’s unbreakable chains. David’s language anticipates God’s reality. God filled his promise to David with action beyond imagination. We saw it. Resurrection life. Now pouring out God’s Spirit. Lord and Messiah.

How do We Participate?

What do we do? Change mind and action to fit a new recognition of reality. Engage with God in being baptized into Jesus. Receive gifts: Forgiveness of sin (breaking death’s power) and God’s Holy Spirit, an ongoing, universal promise. Join in the community of new life...

Devoted to Apostles’ teaching (deep change), shared community of support and experience, breaking bread (enacting Jesus in shared life), prayer (a living, growing life with God).