

Holy Spirit and the Gift of Life

Thomas Robinson, *Life and More Life 6*, June 9, 2019

Acts 2:1-24, 33 (Translation TR)

¹ When the **day of Pentecost** fully arrived, they were all together in one place. ² **Suddenly** there came from God's realm **a sound like a violent wind bearing in on them**, and it filled up the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And **divided tongues like fire** appeared to them and came to rest on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all **filled with Holy Spirit** and began to speak in **other tongues** as the **Spirit began giving** them something to say.

⁵ Now there were devout **Jews** who had come to stay in Jerusalem from **every nation** under God's realm. ⁶ But when this sound broke out, the **multitude** came together, and they were bewildered, because each one in the crowd began understanding in their own language what they were saying.

⁷ And as their amazement and wonder grew, they said, "Look, aren't all these that are talking **Galileans?**" ⁸ And how is it that **we're listening, each in our own language of the place we were born?**

⁹ We're from Parthia and Medea and Elam. We live in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya by Cyrene. We're pilgrims from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes. We're Cretans and Arabians. And in our very own languages, we're listening to them telling **the magnificent things God has done.**"

¹² And all were **amazed and perplexed**, saying to one another, "**What does all this mean?**" ¹³ But others **in order to make fun** of it started saying, "They've all had too much of **sweet new wine.**"

Peter Describes What God is Doing.

¹⁴ But **Peter**, stood up with the eleven, and addressed them in a ringing voice: "You Judeans and all people of Jerusalem, listen to what I'm saying. You need to know this. ¹⁵ These people aren't drunk, like you're imagining. It's only 9 a.m. ¹⁶ Quite the contrary! **This is what was described through the prophet Joel:**

¹⁷ *'In the last days, God declares, I'll pour out my Spirit on all people: your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your young people will see visions, and your old will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my slaves, both male and female, I'll pour out my Spirit in those days, and they'll prophesy. ¹⁹ And I'll show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below – blood, fire, and smoke! ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the LORD comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'* [Joel 2:28-32]

²² People of Israel, listen to this: **Jesus of Nazareth** is a **man** whom God himself **attested to you by** powerful deeds, wonders and signs that **God did through him** right in front of you – as you yourselves know! ²³ **This Jesus** – in keeping with God's definite purpose and plan – you delivered over to death by using lawless men, and, by nailing him to a cross, **you killed him!** ²⁴ **God raised him up!** He loosed death's agonizing grip, because death wasn't strong enough for him to be held by it. ...

³³ As, therefore, **Jesus was exalted at God's right hand** and received from the Father the **Holy Spirit that God had promised**, he has **poured out this** that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Romans 8:6-17 (Translation TR)

⁶ It's **death** to limit your thinking to ways enslaved by flesh! But **to open your thinking to all the Spirit does is to receive life and peace.** For the way the flesh thinks – focused on self – is hostile to the very reality of God. It doesn't submit to God's instruction; it even blocks off the possibility. ⁸ Those who live in the realm of flesh simply can't become the people that God created them to be.

⁹ But **you don't live lives trapped by flesh but lives empowered by Spirit**, if in fact **God's Spirit is dwelling in you.** Belonging to the **Messiah** means having **his Spirit** in you. ¹⁰ But **if the Messiah is in you**, yes, the body is still dying, still struggling with sin, but **the presence of God's Spirit is life itself** flowing from God's faithful righteousness. ¹¹ **If the Spirit of the God who raised Jesus from the dead is now dwelling in all of you**, then

the God who raised the Messiah from the dead is also going to give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who's dwelling in you right now.

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, the fact that we're physical doesn't mean we owe a debt to keep on living lives trapped by the flesh. ¹³ For if you live that way – turning from the God who gives life – you will really die. But if you join with the Spirit in condemning to death sin itself – with all the ways it turns us against ourselves – you will live.

¹⁴ For all who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. ¹⁵ You didn't receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but you received a Spirit that tells us we're God's children, a Spirit that empowers us to cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ God's very Spirit is bearing witness with our spirit that we're God's children. ¹⁷ But if we're children, then we're heirs – heirs of God and co heirs with the Messiah, as we're suffering with him so that we may also share in His Glory.

Micah 6:6-8

⁶ "With what shall I come before the LORD, | and bow myself before God on high? | Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, | with calves a year old? | ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, | with ten thousands of rivers of oil? | Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, | the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" | ⁸ He has told you, Human (*Adham*), what is good; | and what does the LORD require of you | but to do justice, | and to love steadfast love (*hesed*), | and humbly to walk with your God?

Walking with a God of Wild Surprise

My first sermon, 55 yrs ago, was on Mic 6:6-8. I loved its poetry, call to simple, powerful transformation: Justice, Hesed, a humble walk with God. Challenging. The wild card, explosion is in that phrase "walk with God." God surprises! A surprise may be announced in advance, but is of such character that no one can believe it's really coming.

Pentecost is the great surprise. When leaders of Israel & Gentiles combined to destroy God's Messiah – who embodies Israel, humanity, God – what's the last thing God would do? Pour out God's own self – Spirit – life on these people. Claim their evil deed as his own. Help them to change their thinking (repent) and be plunged into the one they crucified. Forgive them! Make them into a new inclusive – all humanity – community of Grace.

Pentecost implements God's identity defined in the event of Jesus' life, death, resurrection.

Pentecost – Pouring out the Resurrection Life of the Spirit

Peter unfolds the event of Pentecost as continuing Jesus – his death and resurrection. It's the exalted human Jesus who pours out God's promised Spirit. God raises and glorifies Jesus' human body/self from the agony of human death, from the dry bones of Israel's death, by giving God's life to transform the definition of life: creature united with creator in a life stronger than death, more beautiful and creative, more filled with self-giving love.

Who receives first? Lawless murderers and Pagan Gentiles. All of us. Women, men, young, old, slaves, freed, far, near. In Jesus' resurrection, God's kingdom has broken in. Surprise!

Life Empowered by God's Spirit

In Rom 8 Paul describes the effect. Ordinary humans freed from enslavement to self-centered life, little gods. Our mortal bodies – centers of human drama of flesh, spirit, soul, mind, heart, love, desire, sin, holiness – not thrown away but given life as only the creator can.

We're transforming now – body, mind, spirit – for justice, *hesed*, walking with God. Surprise!