

Rebuild



Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, They will raise up the former devastations, And they will repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations.(Isaiah 61:4)

The Point of Pentecost

The Holy Spirit comes down as fire upon the disciples. The wind of God blows mightily upon them. Signs and wonders follow them. Holy Spirit power flows from their lips. This was the purpose of Pentecost.

Not Quite. This may be what *happened* at Pentecost, but this was not the purpose of Pentecost.

The point of Pentecost was not miracles, “tongues” – not even power to speak the Gospel. Certainly evangelism, prayer, and supernatural signs flowed out of Pentecost, but no, these were not its purpose.

If not these things, then what? Pentecost was about creating a Community of Believers in love with God and one another.

A True Pentecostal Sermon

Does this sound too simple? It is simple. But it is this simplicity that the Church desperately needs to regain. And when she does, God and the Gospel will be revealed in God-inspired Pentecostal Power.

Let’s go back to the scene. Peter steps forward, head still warm from the Fire of God that only moments earlier had rested upon him, and boldly preaches, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

Now, how do you suppose those people understood Peter’s Pentecostal sermon? We do not have to guess. The Bible gives a clear account...

“those who had received his word were baptized ... [and] were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer ... and all those who believed were together, and had all things in common.” (Acts 2:41,42, 44)

Note three things— three things which the Church of today must restore among her people if the full meaning of Pentecost is to have its way:

(1) The people were baptized. Whatever one’s opinion on baptism, there is no room for debate around one thing: Baptism expressed one’s acceptance of God’s Covenant - the binding of God’s People with Himself, and they with one another. Baptism formed those who responded to Peter’s Gospel into Community. This is the point of Pentecost.

(2) They devoted themselves to Apostolic teaching. These first Christians knew they had to discipline their minds if they were to live as Christian disciples. It is the same today. The Church must call her people away from the TV, fluff reading, and every other kind of activity the invites “brain sleep,” and once again encourage her people to be *devoted* [the Greek can read, “busy with”] to the study of God’s Word and the ancient Christian doctrines of the Faith. It is this disciplined study that helped form the First Church into

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God’s Community – and Community is the point of Pentecost.

(3) The Christian People were given to fellowship. The original meaning of the word “fellowship” carries with it the meaning of “committed sharing.” It certainly means far more than “socializing” with other Christians. The meaning of fellowship is actually explained right in the Acts passage we are looking at; “and all those who believed were together, and had all things in common.” Pentecost is about transforming the cold “me” and “mine” into the loving “we” and “ours.” It is this kind of Love that is Christian Community, and such Community is the point of Pentecost.

Jesus Makes It Plain

Sometimes one finds a lot of confusion and dissension around how one should interpret the ministry of the Holy Spirit - tongues/no tongues, prophecy/no prophecy, signs and wonders are to be expect/d they are

rare surprising occurrences, God reveals His will through the Scriptures and in other complementary ways/God's will is revealed in the Biblical texts alone, etc. You know the debates.

Although I must admit that I tend to be more on the "charismatic" side of the discussion, both sides of the debate often neglect the basic meaning of Pentecost. Pentecost is not primarily about methods and experiences, it is about God dwelling within and among His People. Pentecost is God sharing His Spirit with us that we may share in His Divine Community. It is in our embracing such a reality that we proclaim the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said it plainly, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Notice Jesus did not say the Holy Spirit would give us power to *do* witnessing, but to "*be* witnesses." There is a difference.

Doing witnessing is about telling others the Message. *Being* a witness is being a reflection of the Message. This later witness is a true Pentecostal witness.

Insight From A Close Friend

John might have been called one of Jesus' "best friends." Though youngest of the 12, John was invited to join the elder Peter and James as a member of Jesus' trusted "inner circle." In answer to John's request, Jesus disclosed Judas as His betrayer to him at the Last Supper. And, of course, Jesus entrusted the care of His very mother to him. John certainly was very close to the heart of His Master.

It was perhaps this closeness that granted John the insight to see the significance of the incarnation and its connection to Pentecost when he wrote, "And the Word (the Son) was God, and **dwelt** among us" (John 1:14).

God in Christ made humanity His *dwelling place*, or as some translate, God was "tabernacled" among us.

What does this have to do with Pentecost? The first "tabernacle-ing" in the Incarnation allowed for the second "tabernacle-ing" at Pentecost. In Pentecost, God indwelt His People and made them His Tabernacle in a way that God in Christ dwelt among us when God took on humanity in Christ. Now, through Him, by the Spirit, "we are the Temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

We are "the Body of Christ", and as such are God's Dwelling. To put it plainly, we have been given the Spirit to testify what it means to be God's Home.

The Spirit has come to make us *be* "witnesses" of His Divine-human Community; to be that "place" where God's love, life and Community is revealed and shared. As a consequence, the world should be able to look at the Church and remark, "Oh, so *that* is how God loves ... (and, as importantly) "Oh so, *that* is what it means to be filled with the Spirit."

The Bottom Line

To honor God's purposes in the Incarnation and Pentecost we must actively and consciously embrace Christian Community. Undoubtedly, such an ideal will require prayer, study, and, most of all, a commitment to love in practical ways. This is what it meant to "move in the flow of the Spirit" to the first Christians, and it is what it still means now. This is the point of Pentecost.

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