

“A Kingdom People” | Pentecost Sunday | Acts 2:1-21
Pastor Nick Shults | St. Mark Lutheran Church | Sunnyvale, CA

On the Day of Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit gives power to the Apostles and the Christian Church to carry out her mission of taking the Gospel to all corners of the world and be “sown as living seeds in the furrows of the world”.

Me →

It never fails...every time I begin working on a project at home...trying to build something or repair something....it always seems that I'm missing a tool. Not that I had it and it's gone but that there's this tool out there that will make the job easier and I don't have it. But I want it. No. I neeed it. I have to have this tool. So I make the obligatory pilgrimage to Home Depot to buy yet another tool to get the job done.

We →

Do you ever feel that way? That if you just had a little more...if you just had this tool...if you just had this skill...if you just had this kind of person on your team life would be so much better? You would be able to accomplish your work or your life so much easier? What we have is never enough. We need just a little more...one more thing...and *then* it will be all good.

And hey, maybe we do that as a church. Do you? I do. Man, the middle school and high school youth we have are awesome...what if we had a few more? Then we'd really be cooking. Man, I wish a few more people would come to Bible class. That would make me feel better. Wouldn't it be great to have it packed out in there? Oh man that would be cool. What if we had a little more cashish in the bank? Then we'd really be cooking with gas, right?! Or what if we had this or that. What if...what if...what if...

God →

But this morning as we celebrate Pentecost Sunday, we want to ask a different 'what if' question. That question is simply this: 'What if...we already have everything that we need to be the Church that Christ has called us to be?' And maybe we can add a second, "what if...we're just not using it?' That's quite a bit of Law hitting you and me right between the eyes but think about that for a second. 'What if...we already have everything we need to be the Church, the Body of Christ...we're just not using it. We don't recognize it and we don't use it.'

But to be honest with you, it's not really a what if question. See, there *is* no question about it. The story that Luke tells is Acts 2 is the story of of gifting the whole Christian church on earth with all that they need to be his people until Jesus comes back to raise us up along with all the dead. That's what this narrative of Pentecost, among other things, tells us.

Pentecost, it's a Greek word, simply meaning 50 days, and it was first a Jewish festival...one of three major festivals that would welcome pilgrims from all over into

Jerusalem to worship and give thanks to God for the harvest. But on the Pentecost after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, things were a little different. We read in our text this morning that the followers of Jesus, probably the 120 that Luke talks about in Acts 1, were together in one place...either in a house or in a room in the temple there in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came upon them. We read Luke's account just a moment ago...a sound like rushing wind, something like tongues of fire landing on the heads of the people, and, filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in other tongues...other languages.

And, we read, at this, people heard them and came to where they were because they heard the "mighty deeds of God" being proclaimed in their native languages. Not Greek or Aramaic or Hebrew but in the languages in which they grew up...their mother tongues. Some might say their "heart language". But they hear this sound, this group of Galileans who, by the way, were known for their accent and their uncultured-ness. They weren't known for their literary or linguistic prowess so imagine this group of people - you can draw your modern-day comparison - and they're speaking the languages of people who, Luke tells us, are from every nation under heaven. That's hyperbole, of course, but he means they're speaking the language of all those in the surrounding greco-roman world.

Of course not everyone is impressed. Some think they're just drunks, getting loaded at 9am and babbling on and on. But this is when Peter steps in. Peter steps up and he begins to explain exactly what's going on here. This is no after-hours party. This isn't a group of people getting wasted in the morning. No, this is nothing less than and incredible work of God *in accordance with His promises made through His prophets*.

Did you get that? This is the work of God that is in accordance with his promises of long ago. What's important to note about the Day of Pentecost here in Acts 2 is that this isn't something new. The birth of the Christian church isn't an audible that God calls. This is the continuation of God's plan of salvation. Promised to his people long ago and continuing on through the ministry of Jesus, in his life, death, resurrection and ascension. The sending of the Spirit is the next step in that program.

In much the same way, the beginnings of St. Mark Lutheran Church wasn't the creation of something new. It was the continuation of God's plan of salvation for this place. In 1949 when this congregation was officially organized, it already had - because of Pentecost - all that it needed to be God's people in Sunnyvale.

If you know the history of this congregation you know that St. Mark was a church planting church. It's the oldest Lutheran church between Mountain View and San Jose. It was established in 1949 but sent people to help plant other churches like St. Paul in Mt. View, Resurrection in Santa Clara, Our Savior in Cupertino, and St. Luke in Sunnyvale.

All of this is an effect of what happened on that Pentecost as Luke records. For He quotes the prophet Joel,

[Read the Joel passage]

God had promised through his prophets that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit would come upon all people. Jesus had promised to His disciples to send the promised counselor. And indeed, this is what happened on Pentecost. And because of that, Christ's church on earth has everything it needs to be the people of God...to be the New Israel which God has created from every nation, tribe, and language.

You →

See...you, yes, you, have already been given all that you need to be God's people. God has provided for you, poured out the holy spirit on you at your baptism. He's called you into this congregation. He given you His Word. And he's given you a mission field in which to work each and every day. Every day, y'all.

Because of Jesus, because of his death which paid for your sins...because of his resurrection, because the grave could not hold him, because of the Spirit given to you in your baptism, you have every single thing you need.

Us →

You have all that you need. We have all that we need in Christ, His Word, and the Holy Spirit dumped on us. We don't need anything else but to let God work in our lives as individuals and as a church body.

A few months ago I was rooting around the office. Every now and again I just snoop around, see what interesting things I might find. But a couple of months ago I happened upon a file folder filled with old church directories. There's some priceless pictures in there, you guys. It's amazing. But the coolest find in that folder was a directory from 1963. Just incredible. It had a page of congregational history. Beautiful, just quintessential 60's family pictures, in there.

But it also had a message from the Pastor. Pastor Herb Bartz, he was the pastor here at St. Mark from 1962 until his retirement in 1986. He writes this:

In effect, God has chosen to work through people like you and me. He has taken broken, sinful people like us and transformed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the means by which God has chosen to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. And God has given us everything we need to impact this community with that Gospel message. How do we do that? Well, Pastor Bartz hit it on the head 56 years ago. Although so much has changed his diagnosis was correct. A body of people, planting themselves as living seeds in the furrows of the world's needs.

I'll be honest, that's the most beautiful sentence I've ever read in my life. But it's so perfect. For this is exactly what the Apostles and Jesus' first followers did. Not only did

they plant themselves as seeds in the physical needs of the people, they also did so with the spiritual needs of the people.

Peter's sermon on Pentecost explains what happened and why...demonstrating that God has fulfilled His OT promises, instilling great hope in a people that were low on it

But they also tend to the physical needs not only of the believers but those outside the community as well.

You see, we're surrounded by a world with deep needs. Spiritual, physical, mental, familial. The list goes on and on. So many needs. And God has given us everything we need to bury ourselves as living seeds in the furrows of those needs. We just need to...what? Pick up our heads and take a look around us.

We have the resources. Most of all we have the Spirit of the living God living *in us*. We need not fear. We need not fret. We need not think that we don't have what we need. because we do. It's the gift that God gave to his people on Pentecost and it's the gift that he's given us in our baptism. Amen.