
The Day the Whole World Changed (Acts 2:1-21)
6/4/2017 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



Happy Birthday! You've made it another year! Do you all have plans to celebrate? No? Maybe none of you were born on this day of the year, but it is still your birthday. Today, we celebrate Pentecost which is the birthday of Christ's Church.

The Church we are talking about today is not this building here. Instead, it is the Invisible Church. It is the gathering of all God's people since the beginning of time. It is every person who has faith in God's promises fulfilled in Christ. That includes you, me, Moses, Elijah, King David, the Apostles, every believer from whatever church or denomination, all people who have faith in Jesus. Pentecost was a monumental moment in the history of the world, and we see that by the simple first words of Joel's prophecy. Joel foresaw Pentecost happening, "In the last days." Today, we celebrate our birthday as we look at the Day the Whole World Changed.

Now, God knows that every good birthday party's gotta have some decorations, right? Well, God went all out for the birthday of his Church. He didn't decorate this day with confetti and party hats, but with miracles.

That's quite the decoration! But don't get lost in the amazement of it, because whenever God does a miracle, he is also giving a message. Wind and fire have been signs of God's presence throughout the Bible. With those miracles, God was saying, "Hey! These Apostles of Jesus: Yeah, they are important! Listen to them! Do what they say! Believe what they teach!"

God wants us focused on the apostles' teachings because they are Christ's teachings. In fact, these teachings, what we call the Bible, are called "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). These aren't simply the words of humans but the very words of God! How many people want God to talk to them but completely ignore the Bible which is God's very Word!?

Furthermore, God tells us that our Faith, our trust-connection to God in Christ comes from hearing the message (Romans 10:17). Again, we see the importance that God puts on what these apostles taught and have written down for us! You can listen to the news, listen to your favorite politician, your favorite show, author, artist, any of

them. Those things are important. But none of them are God speaking to you. None of those things can grow your faith. In the writings of the apostles, in the Bible, God is speaking to you!

The sound of the wind and the tongues of fire were clear messages to all of us that God was with the apostles. By the miracles of Pentecost, God is clearly telling you and me as members of his Church, "Grow in the Word!"

God also worked another miracle that day, which gave a different message. God gave the apostles the ability to speak different languages. Remember the tower of Babel? After the flood, God told humanity to spread out and fill the earth, but they didn't want to. So what did God do? He divided them up by confusing their languages. Suddenly they couldn't understand each other. Their sin led to the division of all peoples on the earth. Now that God had forgiven the sin of Babel by Jesus' work, God gave his people this ability to speak other languages so that we could again be united.

The Bible's narrative is really set up in a kind of hourglass. It starts out very broad. It talks about all of humanity as it looks at our first parents, Adam and Eve and speaks about their family. Then it narrows. Now instead of all nations, the Bible focuses us on the nation of Israel. Finally, it narrows most fully onto Jesus Christ, born of the Israelite people. After Jesus' death, suddenly we see the focus begin to broaden again. Jesus commands us to make disciples of all nations! God's people are no longer only the Jews, but God's people include the whole church, people of every nation who believe in Jesus. So God continues that broadening by giving his disciples the ability to speak different languages.

Notice the prophecy that Peter quotes from Joel. God would pour his Spirit out, not only on one nation, but on all of God's people; not just on men, but all of God's people, men and women; not just on adults, but all of God's people, young and old. Now God's people would come from every nation, from every walk of life! Your friends who don't really like going to church? The Gospel is for them! Your coworkers that you don't really like to be around? The Gospel is for them! Your relatives who has a lot of weird beliefs? The Gospel is for them! No one is excluded.

Now, don't get me wrong. People can and will exclude themselves. As we heard Jesus say in our gospel lesson for today (John 16:5-11), no one can hear that

Gospel message without being convicted. Some will hear and repent. Others will hear and hardened themselves in unbelief. But the Holy Spirit convicts us all. Our mission as the church is not to make people believe, but simply to Go with the Word; to help others grow in God's Word just as we continue growing.

By these miracles of Pentecost, these decorations for the birthday of the church, God changed the world. He gave us, his Church, a mission. By those miracles, God has told us, "Grow in the Word" and "Go with the Word!"

Now, every birthday party has gifts, right? But notice, those miracles were not the gift that God gave us. Instead, God has given his Church the gift of the Holy Spirit. God's power that rested on all those great figures in the Bible, the judges, the prophets, and the apostles; all these people who did incredible things for God's people, they acted by the power of the Holy Spirit working in them. Jesus even went so far as to say, "whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things that these!" How can we possibly do that? By the power of the Holy Spirit! At Pentecost, God poured out his Spirit on you and me, on the whole Church! Now you and I have that same Spirit living in our hearts through the message of the gospel.

Maybe you don't feel like the Holy Spirit is living in you. But remember the miracles! God doesn't want you focused on your feelings. He wants his Church is built on God's Word, right? Therefore, regardless of how we feel, God's Word says, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3). That means you can't believe in Jesus unless the Holy Spirit works that faith in you. That means every believer, every member of that Invisible Church we mentioned before has the Holy Spirit in their heart.

What more could you and I possibly need to fulfill our mission as the Church? What more could we possibly want? If the Holy Spirit himself is living in our hearts, what can't the church accomplish?

By pouring out the Holy Spirit on us, God has given us, his Church, the greatest birthday gift of all. Not only do we have our mission, but we are more than equipped to carry it out by the power of the Holy Spirit! The world would never be the same after that day!

Finally, God has sung for us our birthday song. It is the song that ties all of Scripture together, in fact, it ties all of history together. It is the song of the Gospel message. Peter said, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." This is our song. This is our battle cry. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Satan and his demons, the world that we live in, even our very selves, our sinful natures, all of them want nothing more than for you and me to go to hell. But none of them, not even ourselves, can stand against God's Church. We are armed with this song called the gospel. We are armed with the knowledge of full and free forgiveness of sins won by Jesus for the whole world. So we repent, turn from our sins, and call on the name of the Lord because we know that God alone can save us from our sin. God alone can save us from hell. He did that by Jesus' perfect life which he credits to our account. He did it by Jesus' death on the cross by which he removed our sins from us forever. He did it by raising Jesus to life by which he declared us innocent on all charges.

At Pentecost, God changed the world because his church was born; a church armed with the message of full forgiveness in Jesus Christ. And Scripture tells us that this proclamation of Jesus as God, Jesus as Savior will not be stopped, not even by the gates of hell.

Satan has set up his stronghold on this world and even in our hearts. But on that day of Pentecost, God started a grass-roots rebellion against sin, death, and hell. The Church is taking this world back for God. The Church is daily tearing down the gates of hell that surround this world, even those that surround our hearts. We are armed with the gospel message. We are equipped with the Holy Spirit's power. And God has proclaimed our mission to Grow in the Word and to Go with the Word.

Dear fellow members of *the* Church, happy birthday. Never forget that day. Never forget the miraculous decorations, the gift of the Spirit, and the song of the gospel. As God's Church, fight the good fight. Grow in the Word. Go with the Word. And never forget the Day the Whole World Changed. Amen.