

Pentecost Sunday:
Mighty Works, Mighty Wind
15 May 2005

Text: John 14:8-17: 8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Acts 2: 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 dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men 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."

Introduction

On the eve of D-Day on 6 June 1944, General Dwight D. Eisenhower told his troops, "Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force! You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade."¹ That day, roughly 6,000 ships ferried 176,000 soldiers across the English Channel to invade France. The liberation of Europe had begun.

Today, the Church celebrates Pentecost, the Jewish festival on which the Holy Spirit was sent into the Church. On that day, the liberation of the world from sin began, but under far more humble circumstances. Fewer than 200 people, led by a Galilean fisherman, poured out of an upper room into the streets of Jerusalem. This ragtag group had one major advantage: the power of Almighty God. The Holy Spirit came to empower the Church to change the world. The Church has grown from fewer than 200 people on Pentecost to approximately 2 billion people professing Christianity today. The mighty army of the Allied forces pales in comparison to the mighty works of God in His Church.

1. Operation Overlord: The invasion of Fortress Europe. Available online: <http://www.princeton.edu/~ferguson/adw/d-day.shtml>.

Outline

The early believers prepared through prayer. 1:13-14: 13 “And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.” The early believers obeyed the command of Jesus to remain in Jerusalem, awaiting this moment. They knew the Spirit was coming, they simply did not know when.

The Holy Spirit’s presence testifies to Jesus’ trustworthiness. vv. 1-4. Here, I must digress to discuss the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is probably the most misunderstood Person of the Trinity. Notice I said “person,” not “emotion.” The Holy Spirit is not an emotion; He is a Person. He is God!

We need to remember that in the Old Testament, the Spirit was not present with everyone; in fact, only rarely does the Spirit appear to be present with more than one person at a time. In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon people as an external presence, not into people as an internal presence. For example, Samson led Israel, but his behavior story demonstrates the difference between our experience of the Spirit and the Old Testament experience.

Also, it was not a given that the Spirit would remain with a person permanently. When God chose Saul as king, He granted the Spirit to Saul. When the Spirit was removed from Saul because of disobedience, Saul went insane. In this light, we read David’s plea of Psalm 51 — that God not remove His Spirit from him — in a different light.

We often react emotionally to the Spirit, just as we often act emotionally to those we love the most. However, the Spirit is always present with the believer, regardless of emotional state.

However, on Pentecost, we see a change in the way the Holy Spirit works in the world. From this time forward, we see the Holy Spirit permanently indwells believers, as Jesus had promised in John:

... And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (14:16-17).

The Holy Spirit equipped the believers for their mission. On Pentecost, the believers really needed to reach the crowd. But the crowd didn’t all speak the same language! What did God do? He helped the Christians by gifting them with the ability to speak different languages. God will help us to love people and show them how much He loves them.

Notice what the believers preached: “we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God (Acts 2:11).” If you want to know if the Holy Spirit is working in someone, look to see if their lives display the mighty works of God: “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me (John 15:26).” And what were the “mighty works” proclaimed by the disciples? The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ! These are the works we proclaim to the world today.

God prepared those needing salvation. vv. 5-11. Notice these were “devout” people from everywhere. God had prepared the way centuries before by decreeing the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-22).

If you will look in your life, you can see how God has prepared you for this moment. He loved you even before you were born. You are here today because He has brought you to this moment in your life. By His love, God wants to save you from the sin you have committed in your life and bring you to love Him. Those who love God will ask Jesus to be the Lord of their lives, believing that God has raised Him from the dead. Jesus will become the authority in your life and will lead you to serve others in His name.

God gives victory to the Church. vv. 37-41: 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, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ 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, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

When Peter preached on Pentecost, 3,000 people joined the Church, experiencing the love of God and believing in the mighty works proclaimed by the disciples. God continues to give victory to us today. Each of us here today gives witness to the victory of God over sin when we ask Jesus to forgive us of our sins and live with us in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

To return to the D-Day theme, the invasion of the world began on Pentecost. Whenever you come to church, you are joining the underground resistance against the evil in this world. Things may look bad right now, but we are assured of victory. The Church has spread throughout the world, telling people there is deliverance from sin and death in the love of God. Christians have often suffered to tell others about Jesus and His love for all. Our message is a simple one: ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins and join Him in loving others.

D-Day was a remarkable achievement, but the success of D-Day pales compared to the mighty works of Jesus Christ and His demonstration of love. We worship in the freedom of God’s love today because of the victory of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.