

Opening Prayer

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Commentary

This is the account of the falling of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus, which occurred on the Day of Pentecost, some fifty days after the Resurrection. As these followers of Jesus (more where there than just the eleven remaining apostles) gathered in

the same “upper room” where they had celebrated the last meal with Jesus, there was a sound like a rushing wind and what seemed to be tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit had come with great power, and these descriptors of wind and fire were the best way that the scene could be described. Then, under this Spirit power, they began to speak in languages other than their native Aramaic. They were heard to be speaking in the languages of the many visitors from around the world who had gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost, one of the three major Jewish festivals at which all Jewish males were supposed to be present. While the crowd first thought that the disciples of Jesus were drunk, they were still amazed at this “speaking in other tongues.” The disciples were experiencing a new power – a power that changed them from quiet, hesitant believers to bold witnesses of the Resurrection. Peter, speaking for the group, told the crowds that this power came from the Spirit of God. This event was the fulfillment of what Jesus had promised them they would receive after he was physically gone. This power was what would give them the calling, the gift, and the strength to witness to God both in their own communities and to all the world.

Reflection

1. Reflect on your personal experience of the Holy Spirit. Have you felt transformed from being a disciple (learner) into an apostle (one sent to witness)?
2. How does the church as a body of believers experience and live out the power of the Holy Spirit? What forms or evidences might be seen?

I Corinthians 12:3-13

³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. ¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Commentary

The Holy Spirit is a gift to individual Christians and to the church. What does the Holy Spirit do in the church? Paul here gives a partial answer by talking about the Spirit’s gifts to the church. There are varieties of abilities, ministries, and tasks, all of

which are gifts of the Spirit. Each talent, ministry, and job is valued and contributes to the common good. In the church it is never appropriate to boast about our contributions. Teaching, whether in front of a class or through example, is mentioned. Faith is the gift to trust in God. Faith leads to healing and miracles – the work of God in our lives. Prophecy does not refer to forecasting the future, but discerning the will of God. The Spirit helps us to understand the intentions and motives of others. Paul insists that no one should utter ecstatic speech unless there is someone to interpret. The rationale for this is that the gifts of the Spirit are for the building up of the church, which cannot happen if no one understands what has been said. When Paul refers to the body, he means here the church seen as the body of Christ. No matter how different our spiritual gifts may be, we are all part of the same body, and our gifts serve that body in different yet interdependent ways.

Reflection

1. What do you see as your own gifts from the Holy Spirit? How do you seek to use those gifts for building up the church as the body of Christ?
2. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has, unfortunately, been a source of confusion and contention in many churches. Reflect on your own reactions to this reality. What are your feelings about the Holy Spirit and how the church has responded or reacted?

John 7:37-39

³⁷On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, ³⁸and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”
³⁹Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Commentary

This passage returns to the thirst-and-water theme from Chapter 4 when Jesus encountered the woman at the well. There, Jesus offered the woman “living water” to quench her spiritual thirst. Here the invitation is extended to anyone who is thirsty, and the same living water is described as a flowing river. This event occurred on the last day of the eight day Feast of Sukkoth (Tabernacles). This celebration both remembered God’s act of sustaining the Hebrews as they wandered in the desert and thanked God for the most recent harvest. One of the acts of worship during this festival was to pour water from the Pool of Siloam onto the Temple altar as an offering. This reminded the people of the thirst their ancestors had endured in the desert. Jesus looked at this water ritual and boldly invited anyone who was truly thirsty to come to him for “living water.” Jesus was promising this living water through the gift of the Holy Spirit who was to come. The statement that there was no Spirit bears interpretation. Just as solar power has always been present, but only recently has humanity learned to harness it, so the Holy Spirit has always been present in the world, but it had not yet been given to the church in all the

fullness of Pentecost. In John's theology, the Spirit is given to the church by the crucified and risen Lord.

Reflection

1. How do you experience the spiritual thirst for living water?
2. How is the living water given to you, and how does this water change your life?

Responsive Psalter

Based on Psalm 104

²⁴O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵**Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.**

²⁷These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

²⁸**when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.**

²⁹When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

³⁰**When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.**

³³I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

³⁴**May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.**

Closing Prayer

Grant, O Lord, that what has been said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.