

**Acts 2:1-13**

**Pentecost**

**May 31, 2020**

**Gift of the Holy Spirit**

The prolonged spring weather we've had this year in Bakersfield has truly been a blessing; like a consolation during this time of pandemic disruption. But, summer has arrived! Perhaps you know the old ditty, "Spring has sprung, Fall has fell, Summer is here and it's hotter than ... it was last year."

Still, it's a beautiful day here, and wherever you are, because Christ has risen from death and His life-giving power reaches to the ends of the earth. Our social isolation due to the COVID virus, has disrupted our routines and relations. But it has not disrupted God's purposes! On this Pentecost Sunday, we may not be together, in person, but **God's gift of the Holy Spirit makes us one in the resurrected life** that we have in Christ Jesus.

Our messages for the last seven weeks, since Easter, have been about the resurrection power of God. The wonderful truth of Easter is this: ***if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you, Romans 8:11.*** The power that raised Christ Jesus from death is offered to us, to give us life in its fullness, and for eternity.

Many Christians think of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter who comes to them when they're down, or hurt, or sick. Yet the Scriptures and 2,000 years of Christian experience tell a much fuller story of the Holy Spirit's activity in the church and our lives.

The Holy Spirit poured into the church at Pentecost has the mission of witnessing to the believer's own spirit the truth of God's forgiving embrace. When John Wesley began his small groups for committed believers - those who knew their sins had been forgiven by Christ and now wanted to grow in holiness - he wrote down some rules and questions for those admitted to the group. One of the questions was: **"Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God?"** (Rules of the Band-Societies, 1738). That question is still relevant today. Has the Holy Spirit genuinely witnessed to your spirit, so that you truly know you are a forgiven child of God? Has the HS witnessed to your spirit that you have been joined to a new family as a child of God?<sup>1</sup> Further: has the HS led and strengthened you to show the fruit of the Spirit in your living?

**The HS is also given to believers to lead them into all truth. *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate [παρακλητον] to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth... the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:16-17, 26.***

During these days of pandemic disruption, our congregation has had to learn new ways to continue our worship and small groups for discipleship.



Thanks to all you faithful stewards of God's blessings, who have supported the church with your prayers, your tithes and offerings, and your trust of our church staff... thanks to you we've been able to continue worship, small groups, and messages of encouragement for our church family.

Yet Pentecost reminds us that all our efforts will never truly achieve church renewal or revive us as believers. **We must not forget our utter dependence on God.** We cannot function as if it's all up to us. The true church thrives when the HS is active. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, we will worship and do good works, but we will struggle to be faithful disciples, struggle to bring people to the transforming power of Jesus Christ, to baptize people into faith in Christ, and to mentor earnest disciples. All true renewal – renewal in Christ – is simply a demonstration of the Spirit's work.<sup>2</sup>

A television program preceding the 1988 Winter Olympics featured blind skiers being trained for slalom skiing, impossible as that sounds. Paired with sighted skiers, the blind skiers were taught on the flats how to make right and left turns. When that was mastered, they were taken to the slalom slope, where their sighted partners skied beside them shouting, "Left!" and "Right!" As they obeyed the commands, they were able to negotiate the course and cross the finish line, depending solely on the sighted skiers' word. It was either complete trust or catastrophe.

What a vivid metaphor for the Christian life! In this world, we often think we know the way to go ... but we're blind to the future. **We must rely solely on the Word of the only One who is truly sighted - God Himself.** The Word was in the flesh – that's Jesus – and the Word continues to guide us into all truth – that's the Holy Spirit. His Word gives us the direction we need to finish the course.<sup>3</sup>

As the risen Jesus ascended into heaven he said to his disciples, **... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, Acts 1:8.**

Jesus is indeed alive and still gives resurrection power. We can obey his commands in confidence: to be his witnesses to all people we meet, in all places; people from all walks of life, nations, and races. *If you love me*, he said, *you will obey my command*, John 14:15.

Though nations rise and fall... though our plans and dreams do not come to pass... though some around us grow cold in faith and drift away... though we grow old, our hearing and eyesight dim... though all should change around us, the Word of our Lord stands forever.

Do not let your hearts be troubled...trust in the Lord; receive the power of the Holy Spirit. And **always be ready to tell of the hope you have in Christ Jesus.** For He is truly risen!

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Teachings*, Vol. 4, Zondervan 2014, 32.



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<sup>2</sup>David F. Watson, *Good News, January/February 2015*, (The Woodlands, TX), 15.

<sup>3</sup>Robert W. Sutton, [www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/t/trust.htm](http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/t/trust.htm)