

Happy Pentecost! You can tell it's the Day of Pentecost from all the red up here! And the red you see today is a symbol for fire; the fire of the Holy Spirit who was poured out on the 120 believers in Jesus that very first Pentecost after our Lord ascended into heaven. The Holy Spirit came to them in a very unique way with the sounds of rushing wind and tongues of fire. The color red we see this morning reminds us of the power of the same Holy Spirit who is alive and active in us and in our church doing so many amazing things today.

Pentecost is a day of celebration! It's a day to give God glory. It's a special day on the church's calendar to remember and hold fast to our identity as a people of God. It's also a day to hold fast to the purpose God has for our lives in this world **and** in the world to come.

And today there are even more reasons for us to celebrate, many more! For starters, we welcome new members into our church family during fellowship time. We are so glad to receive them into our congregation! Today also marks the conclusion of another successful year of Sunday School! We are grateful for the teachers who have taught, the kids who have learned and grown in their faith in Christ.

Today is also Armed Forces Sunday which I will talk more about more, momentarily. This morning we also will get to/got to witness God at work in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism as our Lord made little Faith the newest member of God's family here at First Lutheran!

So much to celebrate this morning! So much to be thankful for! So much encouragement! What an especially wonderful Pentecost Sunday!

Our Gospel Lesson for this morning is a Pentecost sermon preached by Jesus not on the Day of Pentecost but on the night before He was put on trial and sentenced to die; the setting is Maundy Thursday in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here, Jesus gives us a wonderful promise: He will send the Holy Spirit- "the Spirit of truth" (15:26). He also tells us what the Holy Spirit will do when He comes. He will completely reverse the result of the trial of the next day. He will convict the world of sin, direct us to the righteousness Christ offers, and assure us of Satan's defeat (16: 8-10). The Holy Spirit will personally confirm the Easter victory won by our Savior on the cross and the empty tomb. This promise to the disciples was fulfilled 50 days after Easter on the Day Pentecost, and it has been fulfilled for us as the Holy Spirit works in our

lives today through the Means of Grace, God's Word and Sacraments.

These really are awesome ways that God works in our lives. They may not seem as impressive as rushing wind and flames of fire, but that doesn't mean the Holy Spirit isn't still doing powerful and miraculous things in our lives and in our world right now.

Today is Armed Forces Sunday. Every year since 1949 the third Saturday in May has been set aside in our country to recognize and give thanks for the men and women who are currently serving in the Armed Forces to keep our nation safe. In the church we express our gratitude for our men and women currently in uniform on the next day as we gather for worship.

As I was thinking of a way to illustrate how the Holy Spirit goes about His work in our lives I was reminded of one of the many impressive pieces of technology that is used by our Armed Forces, and that is the B-2 Spirit stealth bomber. If you are ever fortunate enough to witness one of these aircraft in mid-flight your first inclination would be to look up and expect to see that plane where you hear the sound of it. But, if that's what you do, you won't see anything, all! That's because by then, the B-2 Spirit stealth bomber is already miles ahead of its sound. If you become

fixated on the ***sound*** then you'll completely miss the plane.

In our world today, we have people who insist on focusing their attention on the sound and the fire of Pentecost. They're amazed at the mighty rushing wind and the tongues of fire, (even the miraculous speaking in different languages) as though these things were the real power of Pentecost. Maybe a good way for us to view the Holy Spirit is as a "stealth" Spirit because He is not at all interested in calling attention to Himself. Jesus tells us in the opening verse of our Gospel lesson, "But when the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who goes out from the Father, He will testify about ***me***" (Jn 15:26). Pentecost is not about the sound or the fire, or the languages spoken, but about the Word, which comes to us in the Means of Grace: God's Word, the Lord's Supper, Absolution, and Baptism. All of these things point us to Jesus, as the Holy Spirit delivers to us the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation which Jesus earned for us.

In his book, [Make Disciples, Baptizing](#), Dr. Robert Kolb reminds us that Baptism played a central role in the life of the early church, and it should play a central role in the church's ministry today. Although our American culture is becoming more and more secularized with less

and less focus put upon God, people today still have a deep longing to connect with God. The message of Pentecost is that God also has a deep desire to connect with people, all people.

In coming into our lives in Baptism, the Holy Spirit has given **witness** to the truth of God. He has taught us that our sins are forgiven in and through Jesus Christ, that we are connected with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as our fellow believers.

Having received this witness, the Holy Spirit empowers us to be witnesses to others, as Jesus says in verse 27 our Gospel reading. We have God's own word and promise to be with us in this task of making new disciples and building up the entire body of Christ, that is, all believers in Him, as we gather together in the Divine Service.

The story of God's saving activity in the Christian life begins with Baptism. That's when we first had our own Pentecost experience, as the Holy Spirit, working in stealth-mode, was first given to us. From there, as our life story- our **faith** story- develops, and as each of us lives out the meaning of Baptism, our life and the lives around us are impacted for eternity.

Baptism has a huge impact on the life of the one being baptized and upon the life of the family. In the

order of service for Holy Baptism, parents and sponsors make a commitment before God to bring the child up in love of the Lord. In other words Mom, Dad, and sponsors are promising to raise this child in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. They're promising to make sure they teach God's Word to their child *in addition to* bringing them to Sunday school, Divine Service, and Catechism classes. It's a big task, an important one, thankfully we have the Holy Spirit to help us **and** to forgive us when we fail to do it as we should, and the Spirit helps us to do better.

The impact of the Holy Spirit's work in our life goes beyond the immediate family too, because in Baptism God is bringing the child into the family of **all** believers - the **entire** Christian church. Together with our fellow believers, we serve our Lord- who gave His all for us. As members of God's family we have been sent. We are sent to be witnesses, witnesses to God's grace and truth in Jesus Christ. We are sent to tell people around us that in Jesus Christ their sins are forgiven and that He has conquered our enemies of sin, death, and hell. We are the living people of God whom God is sending today to bear witness to the truth of Jesus Christ as He seeks to save people from hell and deliver them to heaven.

God has made us a people; a people with a mission: To live our lives in joy and confidence and to share the Good News with others, so they too may know the eternal life Christ won for them. This, and all of His spiritual blessings, God delivers to us through the Holy Spirit who is powerfully at work for us in His Word and His Sacraments. Amen!