“Why Pentecost Is Important”
Acts 2:1-47

I don’t know what comes to mind whenever you hear the word ‘Pentecost,’ but depending upon your church background, it may have different shades of meaning. For some, it may convey images attached to ‘Pentecostalism’ and certain charismatic excesses. For others, it may be an unfamiliar term. Regardless of the baggage that may be associated with the word, ‘Pentecost’ is a biblical term, which makes it a very important term.

Without Pentecost, you and I would be without power both in our individual lives as Christians and in our corporate life as a local body of believers. What happened here in Acts 2 at Pentecost still reverberates throughout the world even all these centuries later.

You may or may not be aware of this, but ‘Pentecost’ is actually an Old Testament term. It comes from a word that means ‘Fiftieth Day.’ The feast of Pentecost was observed by the Jews fifty days after Passover. All of the feasts of Israel that are outlined in the Mosiac Law were shadows of the work of Christ.

- Passover foreshadowed His death on the cross
- Firstfruits foreshadowed His resurrection from death
- Pentecost foreshadowed His abiding presence

Thus, you cannot separate what happened at Pentecost from the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross. Jesus died and was resurrected so that His Spirit could come to dwell in a new sanctuary—His church.

From here in Acts 2, I want to show you how Pentecost is important for at least three reasons—it signifies the arrival of the Spirit, supplies the power for the mission, and signals the birth of the church.

1. It signifies the ARRIVAL of the Spirit (2:1-13)
The promise of the Father that Jesus referred to is given to His disciples at Pentecost. For the first time in redemptive history, the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers. Before, the Spirit came upon God’s people to empower them for some task.

Never had He resided within people until now.

(Exposition of 2:1-13)

1—When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

Remember that the disciples had been staying together in an upper room. They had been meeting largely in secret because of the threat posed by the religious leaders.

Back up in 1:14, we are told that they were together with one accord and were devoting themselves to prayer. In obedience, they were waiting as Jesus had told them to.

2—And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

Notice that the text says the disciples experience both sounds and sights. The sound they hear is that of a violent wind like that of a hurricane.

It was not a calm breeze, but a rather a powerful wind; the Spirit came in power and took up residence in their lives.

3—And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

The idea is that what they saw could best be described as tongues of fire. It is an expression used to describe that which was supernatural.

All throughout Scripture, whenever the presence of God descended upon a place, He did so in the form of fire.

For instance, consider how:

- He appeared to Moses in a burning bush
- He led the Israelites in a pillar of fire
• He consumed Mt. Sinai in fire when giving the law

• He filled the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s temple with fire

Here in the text, the ‘fire’ of God’s presence has some to rest on each one of the believers. Now, every believer has become a burning bush; every believer has become the holy of holies.

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 even 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.’

12—And all were amazed and perplexed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’

13—But others mocking said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’
What happened here is the baptism of the Spirit that was promised back up in 1:5. What does ‘baptism’ of the Holy Spirit mean? Figuratively, it means to be ‘identified’ with.

**Warren Wiersbe**—“The baptism of the Spirit is that act of God by which He identified believers with the exalted Head of the church, Jesus Christ, and formed the spiritual body of Christ on earth.”

In other passages found throughout the New Testament, the apostle Paul defines it as the act of Christ by which He sovereignly places believers into His body.

**1 Corinthians 12:13**—“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

**Galatians 3:26-28**—“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

This was initiated at Pentecost, and today it happens whenever a sinner trusts Jesus and is born again. When you come to faith in Christ, you are ‘baptized’ in the Spirit.

**John MacArthur**—“In contrast to much errant teaching today, the New Testament nowhere commands believers to seek the baptism with the Spirit. It is a sovereign, single, unrepeatable act on God’s part, and is no more an experience than are its companions justification and adoption.”

The purpose isn’t to divide the body of Christ but to unify it.

There is only one baptism, but **many** fillings. Elsewhere, believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. What is the difference? The baptism of the Spirit means that I belong to Christ's body; the filling of the Spirit means that my body belongs to Christ. The baptism is final; the filling is repeated as we submit ourselves to God. The baptism involves all other believers, for it makes us one in the body of Christ; the filling is personal and individual.
As they were baptized in the Spirit, and then filled with the Spirit, notice the text says the apostles were supernaturally given the gift of ‘tongues.’

The word in Greek is ‘glossa’ and refers to the language or dialect used by a particular people distinct from that of other nations. In other words, these were legitimate languages to aid in the purpose of declaring the praises of God to the multiple language groups that were present in Jerusalem for Pentecost. If you notice, Luke mentions at least fifteen different geographical locations.

In their own language, those who were present from these locations heard the apostles declaring the message of Jesus. They were amazed that these unlearned Galileans were fluently speaking foreign languages.

These languages were intended to be a sign to unbelieving Israel, a sign that helped authenticate the truth of the message that was being declared. It demonstrated that a transition was taking place from the old covenant to the new, and as such, served as a sign to the Jews.

Paul says as much:

1 Corinthians 14:21-22—“In the Law it is written, ‘By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me,’ says the Lord. Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?”

Why the gift of languages at Pentecost? Think of it this way—it was a reversal of the judgment at the Tower of Babel where God confused humanity’s language. There, it was for the purpose of scattered a unified people. Yet here at Pentecost, it is for the purpose of unifying a scattered people. Babel was all about the praise of man in rebellion against God; Pentecost is all about the praise of Christ in submission to God.

Pentecost also demonstrates that the gospel is for all! The apostles are moved out of hiding and into the open square.
The point is that God gave the gift of His Spirit just as He had promised. Christ died for sins, was raised from the dead, and has ascended to the Father. He now gives His Spirit to those who repent and trust in Him for salvation.

Before His death on the cross, Jesus had prepared His disciples for this:

**John 14:12**—“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.”

**John 14:16-17**—“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.”

He tells them that He will not leave them as orphans, but will come to them. How will He do this?

**John 16:7**—“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”

J.D. Greear has said it this way, “The Spirit inside me is **better** than Jesus beside me.”

It is to our advantage that Jesus ascended to the Father, for it means that now His Spirit has come to live within us and empower us as the followers of Jesus.

Pentecost is important because it means that the promised Holy Spirit has arrived. It signifies that God has kept His promises made throughout Scripture. But notice that it is important for a second reason—

2. **It supplies the POWER for the mission (2:14-41)**

When the Holy Spirit came to indwell the disciples, notice that the result is power supplied for the mission of gospel proclamation. This is exactly what Jesus said would happen. They would receive power once the Holy Spirit came. As His empowered
witnesses, they would declare the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

It begins in Jerusalem with Peter who preaches to the thousands assembled for Pentecost. Though we don’t have the time to go through it verse by verse, what we find here in verses 14-41 is essentially the very first Christian sermon.

Those in Jerusalem were perplexed as to just how exactly a bunch of unlearned Galileans were testifying in multiple languages of the truth of Christ’s resurrection.

Their questions prompted Peter’s response who capitalizes on the opportunity to preach Christ.

(Exposition of 2:14-41)

14—But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

15—For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

16—But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

17—‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

18—even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

19—And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

20—the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.
21—And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

22—Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—

“Attested”—word means proven or authenticated

23—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

24—God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

25—For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;

26—therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.

27—For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.

28—You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

29—Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

30—Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,

31—he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

32—This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.
33—Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

34—For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,

35—until I make your enemies your footstool.'

36—Let all the house of Israel therefore know or certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

37—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.

Pentecost means that the power we need for the success of the mission has been supplied through the gift of God’s Spirit with us and in us.

This is a very different Peter than we last saw cowering down before a servant girl at a fire. This Peter is bold and empowered. Such is the difference that the resurrected Christ makes, living inside a believer through His Spirit.

Notice the components of Peter’s message:
• He connects what had happened with fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

• He declares Jesus to be crucified.

• He testifies of the resurrection of Jesus.

• He asserts the Lordship of Christ and calls upon his hearers to repent and trust in Him for salvation.

He essentially gives his hearers an opportunity to respond in faith to the gospel message. We have not fully declared the truth of Christ until we have called upon people to repent and believe in Him.

There is an interesting parallel here in Acts 2 when you consider it alongside of Exodus 19. For example, when the fire of God fell on Mt. Sinai, there were 3,000 Israelites who died because they broke God’s law. However, when the fire of the Holy Spirit fell here, there were some 3,000 who were made alive! Jesus had already died for our law breaking ways. He Himself endured the fire of God’s wrath so that we could be saved and receive His life-giving Spirit.

3. It signals the BIRTH of the church (2:42-47)

Pentecost is important because it signifies the arrival of God’s Spirit who came to dwell in Christ’s disciples. It is important because it means the power that we need for our mission has been supplied. And then also notice that it signals the birth of the church. As Peter concludes his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, we are told that 3,000 people believe his message and come to personal faith in the Lord Jesus.

Thus, the church is born, and the picture we have of the early church at the close of chapter 2 is powerful indeed.

(Exposition of 2:42-47)

42—And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
43—And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

44—And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

45—And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

46—And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

47—praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

This is what a local church should be. At our core:

We are to glorify God through WORSHIP.

We are to follow Christ in DISCIPLESHIP.

We are to relate to one another in FELLOWSHIP.

We are to give to others through MINISTRY.

We are to witness to the lost through EVANGELISM.

There were certain ‘core’ values that were held in deep conviction by the early church, the same convictions that we share as a local church even though we are nearly 2,000 years removed. They valued:

1. **Divine dependence**—they were people of prayer and faith who relied upon the power of the Holy Spirit

2. **Personal evangelism**—the Lord added daily to the church as they were faithful to spread the gospel

3. **Biblical instruction**—they gave themselves to the teaching of the apostles
4. **Authentic community**—they opened up their homes to one another and were in each other’s lives

5. **Selfless service**—they sold their possessions to help meet the needs of their brothers and sisters

6. **Global mission**—they will take the gospel to the ends of the earth and plant other churches

Wiersbe points out how these early Christians that we are introduced to in the book of Acts were not content to meet merely once a week for services as usual. They met with one another daily (2:46), cared for one another daily (6:1), won lost people to Christ daily (2:47), searched the Scriptures daily (17:11), and they increased in number daily (16:5). Their faith was a day-to-day reality vs. routine.

Why? The answer lies in the fact that the risen Jesus was a living reality to them, and His resurrection power was at work in their lives through the presence of His Spirit.

I find it amazing that the early church had none of the things that we assume are necessary for ministry success today, and yet the church won thousands of people to Christ and saw churches established throughout their world. The reason can be attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit who energized their work.

**J.D. Greear**—“Seriously, have you ever thought about the overwhelming nature of the Great Commission? At the beginning, they were only twelve strong, with no money, no power, and no people in strategic positions of influence. They were just a group of local, blue-collar workers with the entire world arrayed against them. Unless the Spirit guided them through this mission, they couldn't help but fail. They had no choice but to look to the Spirit for help.”

You and I are gathered here together this morning in this room because of what happened at Pentecost. The same Holy Spirit who came to indwell and empower them is the same Spirit who has come to live within our hearts even today. The better we understand His working at Pentecost, the better we will be able to relate to Him and experience His power in our hearts and lives.
Here is what Pentecost means for me as a Christian:

- I have **SOMEONE** who is with me

This means that I have been supplied with sufficient strength for life. Jesus told His disciples that apart from Him, they could do nothing. Nothing literally means ‘no thing.’ Without His divine presence living inside of us in the person of the Holy Spirit, we cannot accomplish even the simplest of His commands. It means we cannot overcome sin without the Spirit. We cannot love others without the Spirit. We cannot lead other people to Jesus without the Spirit. We cannot raise our children, love our spouse, or teach our classes without the Spirit.

He is the Helper who has come, as **SOMEONE** who lives in me and is with me at all times and in all places.

- I have **SOMEWHERE** to belong

The Holy Spirit has made me a part of the body of Christ, which means that the Christian life is to be lived in close relationship with others. The Spirit knows nothing of ‘lone ranger’ Christianity.

- I have **SOMETHING** to do

I have Someone who lives within me, somewhere to belong, and now I have something to do in life. My life has meaning and purpose. In the book of Acts, the Spirit takes those He indwells and sends them back into the world on mission. In fact, He seems to spend more time taking the believers outside the church than keeping them in it. Wow!

What God did at Pentecost means that as a Christian man or woman, you have all the power you need to do what God has called you to do. We are not lacking of resources, but have been given what we need through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Think about it.

**Henry Martyn**—“The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions, and the nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we must become.”
It means you have the presence of God with you wherever you go and in whatever you face. It means there should be passion in our worship because the living Spirit of God indwells us as His church. It means that there should be power in our witness to a lost and dying world. It means that there is now great purpose in our gathering together as the redeemed people of God.

If you are not yet a Christian, let me once again use Peter’s words to those in Jerusalem —

Acts 2:38-39—“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. 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.”