

Pentecost

Pentecost is a Greek word that means “50.”
We celebrate it today because today is 50 days after Easter.
But there was a Festival of Pentecost before there was an Easter.
OT Jews were commanded by God to celebrate Pentecost annually.
That's why there were many thousands of visitors in Jerusalem on Pentecost.
They were there to observe the OT festival.
50 days after the angel of death killed all the first-born of the Egyptians...
50 days after the same passed over the first-born of the faithful...
50 days after the Passover Lamb was slaughtered to spare their lives...
50 days after the unleavened bread and bitter herbs...
50 days after the freed Israelites were baptized in the Red Sea...
50 days after the Egyptians were drowned as it closed over them...
They came to the foot of Mount Sinai.
It was covered with fire and smoke and surrounded by a fence.
There, God gave us His holy Law.
It was etched in stone by the finger of God.
It was written on scrolls by God's scribe, Moses.
It demands a life above reproach
 Holiness and cleanness; purity and righteousness.
 Do this and you will live—do it not and you shall die.
...and it prescribed a worship instituted by God Himself.
 Lambs and goats; bulls and heifers; doves and pigeons;
 Blood—lots of blood—the smell of burning flesh and incense.
 A temple, a courtyard, a holy place and a most holy place.
 In the center of it all, a box—the ark of the covenant
 —covered by a throne that seemed empty.
All of these things are in view as the pilgrims packed into Jerusalem.
The Law of God, the fire of God, the writing of God, the temple of God...
But all of that was *incomplete* because Pentecost had not yet *fully* come.
But now, today, the Gospel begins by announcing that the day of Pentecost is
 FULLY come!!
Here is no longer the shadow but the real thing.
Words in scrolls and etched on stone are completed by preached Words.
They do not fall away, mind you.
God here does not take away the written Law which says, “Obey or die.”
This is still in full force. Every one of your transgressions deserves death.
 ...And every death is the direct result of sins.
But this is incomplete in that it cannot save anybody.
And so, today, the Pentecost has fully come.
You who deserve to die because you have sinned against the written Law...
 ...now hear the oral proclamation: “believe and live!”

And this preaching is not written on scraps of paper or etched on stone, rather
 it is proclaimed to you by the living mouth.
In the human reckoning of things, oral words are less sure than written.
But not in God's reckoning. — That's the point of the fire.
The first Pentecost had fire on the mountain with fear and trembling.
The fully-come Pentecost has fire on the tongues of those who preach the
 Gospel of Jesus Christ in every language.
Most pictures of Pentecost put the fire on the heads of the apostles.
But the Bible doesn't say anything about fire on their heads.
Instead, the Bible says only that they were TONGUES of fire.
Fire on the mountain showed the presence of God with all His power & might.
Fire on their tongues shows the same thing.
But now it is not located on a high mountain and accessible only to Moses.
Now that very same power and might comes to you from a human tongue.
On the day that Pentecost fully came, God showed what is true for His Church.
Just as the Dove and the Father's voice at Jesus' baptism show that the Holy
 Spirit and the Father are present when you are baptized into Jesus' name...
So also the tongues of fire at Pentecost show that God the Father, Son and
 Holy Spirit are present with all their power when you hear true preaching.
It is the same thing that happened to the prophet Isaiah: *“Then one of the
 seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken
 with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it.”*
On the night in which He was betrayed, Jesus spoke of these things.
The nearer He came to the cross, the more He spoke of the Trinity.
This is no accident.
For the work of the Holy Spirit is not somehow disconnected from the cross.
The Holy Spirit does not come to teach you about new and different things.
Rather, when the Helper comes, He brings to your remembrance *“all that I
 said to you.”*
There are many “spirits” in the world today.
Not all are of God. Only One is the Holy Spirit.
John exhorts us to *“test the spirits to see if they are from God.”*
And this is the test. Does the spirit bring to your remembrance the Words of
 Jesus or is he rather concerned with other things.
The Holy Spirit is not about telling you the future.
He does not come to give private revelations.
Nor does He come to give new directions for the modern Church.
His main concern is not about speaking in tongues but about preaching.
An the content of the Holy Spirit's preaching is Jesus Christ crucified for you.
Your sins are paid for. Your penalty is taken by another.
Your life is given back to you and death cannot harm you.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and by the power of His Holy Spirit.
Whom Jesus sent into the world on the day of Holy Pentecost. AMEN.

P Guided by the Holy Spirit, who teaches us to know Christ and all His benefits, let us pray for the Church, the world, and for all people according to their needs.

P For the whole Church that, illumined by the Holy Spirit, all Christ's people may be filled with His righteousness, peace, and joy, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For our congregation, district, and Synod, that we might walk together in the Spirit, boldly witnessing to the hope of the Gospel, and especially for Gerald, our synodical president, and _____, our district president, that God would bless their faithful leadership among us, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all mission starts at home and abroad, that through them the Spirit would continue His gracious work of calling, gathering, enlightening, and sanctifying by the Gospel and thus bring many to faith, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For our nation and all nations of the world, that those who delight in war and violence may be hindered, and that prejudice and enmity give way to understanding and compassion, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who have given their lives in the defense of our nation, we give thanks to God. That He would continue to preserve this nation and the freedoms that we enjoy, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all who are sick and suffering (including _____), for the grieving (especially _____) and for the dying (including _____), that through the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, the trials of this life may be trans-formed into communion with the Son of God in His suffering, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all who travel this holiday weekend and during the summer months, that God would grant diligence to all who drive on our nation's highways and protection from serious injury and death, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who come this day to the table of Christ, that the Holy Spirit would fill their hearts with faith in the Lord's promise that His body and blood are given for their forgiveness, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For the faithful who have gone before us, let us give thanks. That God would grant us a share with them in the joys that have no end in the kingdom of the Father, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.