

Acts 2.1-21

Dies festa pentecostes

4 June 2017

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

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Fellow-redeemed: Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I've got a dollar bill in my hand here. On the one side, the face of Washington. On the other, the pyramid and seal of the United States of America. No matter which side you look at, it's still a dollar bill. You're just looking at a different side of the same thing. But you can't have a dollar bill without both sides.

So it is with salvation. On the one side of that bill you've got the incarnation, life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without that, there is no salvation.

On the other side, you've got the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost. Forever bound with the preaching of Christ. Forever bound to the water of Holy Baptism. Forever bound to the forgiveness of sins in Christ. To the Absolution. To the Sacrament of the Altar. Without that, there's also no salvation.

Christ crucified and Christ proclaimed. Christ incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin and Christ incarnate in the Sacrament of the Altar. Christ buried and risen in Jerusalem and your burial and resurrection with Christ in Baptism. Salvation won on the Cross. Salvation distributed in Word and Sacrament. All of it hangs together.

And that's what we celebrate today. The "other side" of the dollar bill. That "salvation distributed" side of the bill. For the Lord poured out the Holy Spirit for no other reason than that repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Christ's name might be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. To Him, with the Father and the Son, be all glory and honor forever and ever.

We rise to sing our Exordium hymn, "Holy Spirit, God of Love," found in your bulletin.

The words to which we turn our attention today are the words of second reading, and especially this: "In those days I will pour out my Spirit."

Oremus: haec, pater sancte, verba tua sunt, etc.

On the sixth day of everything the Lord God drew together a pile of dust from the ground. It was just an unremarkable heap of dust. Inanimate. Soulless. Nothing going. Less interesting than all the creeping things that crept, than all the swimming things that swam, than all the flying things that flew. For so the Lord God had commanded them. And so they did. Even the sun and moon ran their course around the earth and shone in all their splendor. Even the sea obeyed its charge: this far and no farther. For so the Lord God had commanded. And so they did.

But as yet, the man was nothing. Nothing but...dust. Nothing but the earth from which he had been taken. Inanimate. Soulless. Unheeding and unable to heed the command of the Lord God. For he was without life itself.

But then the Lord God breathed into the nostrils of that first man the breath of life. And he became a living creature. Animated. With a thinking mind. With a believing soul. Known by God, he also knew God. Perfectly. And he not only heard, but also heeded, the command of the Lord. And obeyed it. "Name all the other creatures and have dominion over them. Be fruitful. Multiply. Tend the garden. Proclaim My name to your descendants. Be My stewards. And have all that you see for food. Only not this: not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For in the day that you eat of *it* you shall surely die.."

And the man believed the Lord God and obeyed. And his wife. So it was. For how long we cannot know. Eons perhaps. Or only just days. But so it was intended to be. The man and his wife in perfect communion with the Lord God who had created them. The life of the ever-living God breathed into the nostrils of Adam and through his rib into the lungs of Eve. The holiness of the entirely holy God imparted to Adam And of his wife, Eve. Hayyah, he called her. "Life."

But then through one man, sin entered the world. And through sin, death. The breath of life was expelled from the nostrils of the living dust. And ears that would not believe and heed and obey the Lord's Word and command heard only this, as the first wrinkles formed, as they saw themselves age before their own eyes: "Dust you are and to dust you shall return."

Hopeless. Life turned into living death. The man and his wife, now ironically called Hawah, Eve, Life, expelled from the garden over which they had been given their stewardship. The steward found dishonest. The holy creation of the holy God corrupted to the core by sin so that his very being became hateful to his own Creator. And the contagion spread. From Adam to Cain; from Cain to Lamech. And so on through ages. So that there is not one, no, not even one, who is righteous in the sight of the Lord God. Including you, whose righteous works are as filthy rags. So that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Including you, who think so little of God and His glory that you prefer your own sin to His works and ways. And death follows. For you, too, whose only certainty in life is the coldness of the grave. Sin and death. Corruption and decay. For the man had, as it were, sneezed out of his very nostrils the breath of life, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the creating Father and redeeming Son.

But that's just the point. He proceeds, this Lord and Giver of Life. That's what He does. He goes forth and pours forth. That's His nature.

And that's what we celebrate on this Feast of Pentecost. That the Lord God refused to take "new normal" lying down. That where hatred of the unholy was not only permitted but even demanded, the Lord God instead had mercy and pity on His creation. On Adam. And Cain. And Lamech. On Peter. On the Jerusalem crowds who had put to death the Lord of Life. On you.

And the proceeding Spirit proceeded. Connected forevermore to the message of Christ.

The remarkable thing about Pentecost isn't all the languages. It's that the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, should have hurled Himself into our hall of death. To bring life where only death may be found. To unplug the ears that cannot, that refuse, to hear the sound of the Lord God. To ears that can't help but misunderstand the Word of Christ any worse than if you were to listen to a broadcast in Hindi. That's the remarkable thing. That's the miracle of Pentecost.

And it's a miracle that has not ceased and will not cease until the Lord Jesus returns again in glory. Until the Lord and Giver of Life raises up all the dead and gives never-ending life once and for all to all who believe in the Lord Jesus. Until then, the miracle will go on. That's the promise. "I will pour out My Spirit on *all* flesh."

If you have faith in Jesus, fellow-redeemed, you didn't do it yourself. It was a gift. The "foreign language" of the Gospel was made your native tongue. Miraculously. The ears that could not, would not, hear the message of Christ were opened.

It was a gift through your Baptism, when with water the Spirit was poured out upon you.

A gift through the message of Christ, to which the Spirit binds Himself, that those who hear it might be given life.

A gift to the unholy through the forgiveness of all their sins for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus.

That the unrighteous might be made righteous.

That the dying might live.

That the eternally condemned might be saved eternally.

That the descendants of Adam who lost right and claim to their stewardship in the Garden might be restored to their stewardship of the earth and all creation. So that the earth and all that is in it. So that all you do and all you are and all you have might be used to the glory and worship of God. To the aid and succor of your neighbor. So that your very life, your tongue, your actions, your money, your time, might declare the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

You know, I've got a big charge today. Not only is it Pentecost. It's also Lutheran Braille Workers Sunday. And not only is it Pentecost and LBW Sunday, it's also the first of our stewardship Sundays. And it's not only that, it's the gathering of our Pentecost door offering to support the training of Lutheran pastors in Guinea, West Africa. Each seemingly disparate things. Each deserving its own point of emphasis. You might think I made a mistake allowing the church calendar for today to get so...crowded.

But I ask you, fellow-redeemed: don't they all hang together? Doesn't the Lord want to pour out His Spirit on *all flesh*? On the seeing as well as the blind, on Black people and White, on Jews and Gentiles, on Europeans and Africans alike? Isn't that what happened to you? And hasn't the good Lord through that restored you to the stewardship lost by Adam, to use the creation for the honor of the Lord? To spread abroad His fame? To support the ministry of Word and Sacrament both here in Topeka and to the ends of the earth?

Because you're not just a bunch of piles of lifeless dust. The Lord has, as it were, breathed into your nostrils the breath of life, the Holy Spirit, through Word and Sacrament. And through faith in Jesus you've been made heirs of everlasting life. Your sins have been forgiven. And in Christ, the Second Adam, the Lord has restored you. Restored you to Himself. And restored you to the stewardship of the created world lost by the First. Just see to it that you exercise your stewardship responsibly. Use what He has placed before you for the welfare of your neighbor. For the glory of the God who created, redeemed, and made you His own. For the support of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. So that many might call upon the name of the Lord. And be saved. God grant it for Christ's sake. Amen.

pax dei, etc.

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