

Jesus Pours Out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

Acts of the Exalted Jesus Sermon Series

Acts 2:1-21

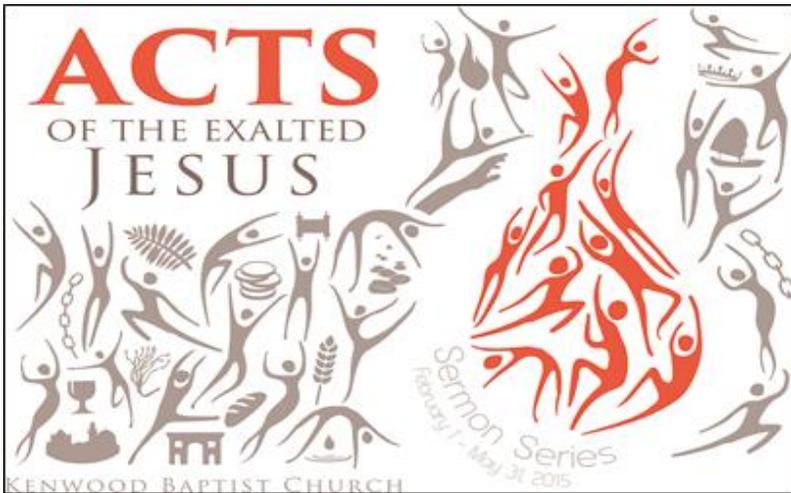
Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

February 8, 2015

TEXTS: Acts 2:1-21

This morning we continue in our New Testament series on the Book of Acts, the *Acts of the Exalted Jesus*. We desire the great effect of the Holy Spirit that we read of in this text, that



moves us from serving Christ out of duty into delight. It moves us from a place of lethargy to action; it moves us from a state of being where we are complacent to being motivated to serve Him; from being lukewarm to burning hot. This Sunday we look at the first action of the Exalted Jesus, which is to pour out the Holy Spirit upon the believing community and fiery

glory like Mount Sinai. God's presence distinguishes the community and empowers them for witness and service. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit causes the wonders of God to be heard by all peoples: men and women; young and old. We want to look firstly at what really happened in this incident of Pentecost. Secondly, we will look at what it means about Jesus. Finally, we'll look at what this means about us. We want to rehearse the story from Acts 2 to make sure we are clear about what was really happening here. Then we'll ask questions, as did those who first encountered this moment: "What in the world does this mean?" It means an awful lot about who Jesus is, and, then by implication, who we are.

We read in acts 2:1 that it was the day of Pentecost. Pentecost means 50 in Greek, and the day of Pentecost is 50 days after the Passover. In the Hebrew tradition, this festival is called the Feast of Weeks, *Shabuot*. It's called *Atzeret*, the completion of the Passover. From the springtime festival of celebrating the deliverance from Egypt under the blood of the Passover Lamb, you count 50 days until you reach the time of Pentecost, and it's on this 50th day of Pentecost that traditionally Israel remembers that God came down in glory, in a fiery glory, upon the mountain of Mount Sinai. In Exodus 19, it was three months after the crossing of the

sea that they came to the mountain of God, and He descended in visible glory and fire. The gift of God's Word is revealed by His presence, by divine revelation. The nature and will of God are made known on the basis of this great act of deliverance, and the appearance of God in Exodus 19, on the original Pentecost, is accompanied by an audible thunder of His voice, by the fiery visible presence of His glory. The assembly at the base of the mountain are transformed into a prophetic, witnessing people by God's presence. So, it is not a coincidence that Jesus tells His disciples to wait precisely for this day. It is not the case that these days just happen to be clear on the heavenly calendar. It is that Jesus is intentionally fulfilling what He had originally done at the original Pentecost. In Acts 2:2, we read:

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.”

There is no Beaufort rating for this type of wind. We heard a couple of weeks ago about the Beaufort scale for wind. This is off the Beaufort chart. There is no Beaufort indicator for heavenly wind. This wind comes, and it fills the house. Then they saw what seemed to be like tongues of fire. That is an important word. It is like flames of fire are resting on each member of this believing community. There were about 120 people gathered in this room, and God's Spirit then fills them. They are set ablaze with the fiery presence of God, yet they are not consumed. They are not consumed by His holiness. Instead, they are compelled to begin to speak. The filling up of the Holy Spirit has its first manifestation among us in our speaking in response. The people begin to speak. The Spirit of God enables them, and this group, this early band of followers of Jesus, began to speak in languages that they did not know by birth, and they declare the mighty deeds of God. So, just like the original Pentecost, is the descent of God in visible glory, hearing His voice with thunder, His declaration of His will, and creating a witnessing, prophetic people. This is exactly what is happening here. Jesus Christ is pouring out the Spirit, and now they are speaking, in response, in languages which they have not learned from their mothers. Pentecost is this giving of the Spirit. What do you do in response to that? People hear this. The pilgrimage throng of Pentecost hears the sound. They rushed around the house in bewilderment, and they were astonished because they heard people speaking their own languages. They were utterly amazed, and they said in Acts 2:7-8:

“Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?”

People from Galilee speak Aramaic. How is it that we are hearing all of these languages, our mother tongues? There were 120 people speaking at the same time, and no translation required. A large assembly gathers around them, and they hear them speaking in their own dialects, in their very own dialects which they had spoken since birth. It's their native language. They hear the Christian community speaking, and they ask what you should ask reading this. The real question in Acts 2:12 is:

“What does this mean?”

What is this all about? The analogy of Pentecost is true and vivid, and I'm sure people made that connection, but it begs this larger question: “What is going on here?” This is extraordinary. The crowd is gathered around them asking what the significance of this is. I imagine that if there is a meeting at the end of this first day, they have got to ask, “Wow, what is the point? What is the meaning of that?” Can you imagine if all of us started speaking at the very same time and all of the international community of greater Cincinnati just swirled around Kenwood Baptist Church and they all heard us announcing the wonders of God in their native language? That would be amazing! That's what is happening, and they ask: “What does it mean?” I want us to consider together what this means about Jesus Christ. It means a great deal.

Firstly, it means that Jesus is alive, and that is a statement of no small consequence. Jesus Christ is alive, and what we see happening in Acts 2 is one, if not the first, act of the Exalted Jesus. This is what Jesus does first upon His return in glory to the Father. Peter explains this in his sermon which follows directly after this in Acts 2:22-24:

“People of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This Man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him.”

Later in his sermon in Acts 2:32, Peter says:

“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”

Many people wandering the globe today believe that Jesus is still dead, that He is an artifact of history, maybe someone whose teachings are to be read and considered like those of other great teachers. But, this first sermon, this first action, is proof positive that death could not hold Him. He is the Author of life; He is alive; and He is active in the world, and this is what He has done. Not only is He living, Peter says, but in Acts 2:33 he says concerning Jesus:

“Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”

This just grips my heart, and I want it to grip yours. I really do, because I want you to live your daily life thinking that Jesus Christ is exalted, that He is alive, that He is on the move in the world, and it's the greatest meaning and significance of our lives to serve Him and be involved with what He is doing in the world. Jesus is alive!

Secondly, it means that Jesus' promises are true. Jesus had said to the disciples in Acts 1:4-5:

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus goes on to say in Acts 1:8:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

As a pastor, I ask people almost every day to trust Jesus Christ, directly or indirectly. You are called to do the same thing. I want to remind you from just this passage, out of 1,000 passages, that Jesus Christ is worth trusting because He is trustworthy, His promises come true in this passage. His promises are true; He can be relied on.

Thirdly, this action signifies Jesus’ sovereign claim over all the earth from the very beginning. Luke goes out of his way to tell us that there were people from every nation under heaven gathered at this pilgrimage feast, and they heard the sound. The sign that Jesus gives of His enthronement is to empower communication across cultural barriers by the Spirit. Luke tells us about the people who were there, and it's a tour of the world that he knew. He says there were Parthians, Medes, and Elamites. These are inhabitants of Asia. There were residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, inhabitants of the Middle East. He mentions Egypt and parts of Libya near Cyrene, inhabitants of Africa. There were visitors from Rome, Europeans. There were Cretans and Arabs, the inhabitants of the islands and desert nomadic regions. Jesus in His first act as Exalted Lord signals to us that all the earth is His and that we are called as a witnessing people to the ends of the earth. Jesus said in Matthew 28 that all authority is given to Him – ALL authority. That is a big ALL! All authority in the cosmos has been given to Jesus, and with that authority, the first thing He tells us is to make disciples of *all* nations. That's a big *all*. The only way you could be given that big *all* is from someone who possesses the first big ALL. *“Go and make disciples of all nations,”* Jesus says.

The young adult community at Kenwood had a retreat this fall, and they tried to describe what Jesus was calling them to be about. I love the phrase that they're using. It is: “We are a family of disciples, making disciples.” Doesn't that capture what we are supposed to be about? Jesus signals from the very beginning His sovereign claim over all the earth. We are privileged this spring at Kenwood to host the *Perspectives* course. If you weren't able to be part of that this year, I want to challenge you to make your schedule in such a way that you can participate next year. The readings alone are stunning. In one of the readings for this week by Stephen Hawthorne, called *The Mandate on the Mountain*, he reflects on Jesus’ gigantic statement here of *all* nations and *ALL* authority. He reflects on the greatness of Jesus, and the implications of this act of Pentecost. He asked these questions:

“Who will ever withstand His wisdom?

Who can daunt His determination to heal the nations?

What demonic power might ever intimidate Him in the slightest way?

Who can deflect His desire to gather all peoples to Himself?

Never has there been such power in the hands of any person.

He will never be surpassed. He will never abdicate His Kingship.

He will never stop until He has finished the fullness of the Father’s purpose.”

That's Who we serve. That's Who we worship, and Acts 2 is a prototype of God's mission to the entire world. It overturns the cacophony of the Tower of Babel to a mission of God to the world. Instead of scattering languages, God gives His people the ability to speak and claim all nations. What does this mean for us? It means several things. When the people who first encountered this heard it, they asked the question: “What does it mean?” and one of the first things that happens to us is we get laughed at. This is sort of a minor application, that part of the implication for us is that people will radically misunderstand you. Here is a group of people that are filled with the Spirit of the living God and ready to offer eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, to their hearers, and the hearers say these people are drunk. That's a pretty radical misunderstanding. Part of what happens for us is that we will be misunderstood in the world, but Christ was misunderstood as well, and we follow in His footsteps. Peter says: “No, that's not exactly it,” and you and I need to be prepared for a Spirit-filled, Bible-saturated, Christ-exalting response when someone misunderstands your faith. Peter says in Acts 2:14-15:

“Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!”

Very few people are drunk at nine in the morning, and that's not the case here. He says that instead, what's going on is the fulfillment of what God had spoken long ago, 600 years before. God had announced His sovereign intention, the end times. He said in Acts 2:17:

“In the last days, God says, ‘I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.’”

The Lord had promised to pour out His spirit, and that the pouring out of the Spirit would mark the latter days. The end times in the Bible begin with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and we live as a people gathered in from all nations. We are an end-time people, filled with the Spirit, gathered from all nations. The end times in the Bible don't predominately refer to the end of the world. That's not how the language is used in the Bible. The end times are the latter days. It's an Old Testament language for God's future, great, saving action in the world.

There are really only two times in the Bible: the former times and the latter times; the beginning and the end. By quoting this, Peter says that the end times have begun. This is massive because it means there is no other great action of God that will happen that is

unrelated to the death and resurrection of Jesus. If you want to know if someone is speaking by the Spirit of God, you can test them, according to the New Testament, by seeing if their speech is making much of Jesus. Is their testimony magnifying the death and resurrection of Jesus, or are they moving on as though there is another saving action in the world? This is the great error of the cults. The great error of all cults, whatever their variety, is to say: "Death and resurrection of Christ? Yes, okay, but now we've moved on, and we have another book, or we have another prophet." The New Testament witness is that the end times have begun with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and He is exalted at the right hand of the Father. He is there enthroned, claiming men women and children from every nation. That is the big news from 2,000 years ago to whenever this world and its history wraps up. There is no other Gospel; there is no other Savior. When the Spirit of God is poured out, (and I love this), He is poured out not only on all ethnic peoples, He is poured out also on men and women; He is poured out on young and old; it is poured out on servants and masters. The Spirit of God is poured out in such a way that crosses cultural barriers, gender barriers, generational barriers, and barriers of social class. The Spirit of God soars over all of those. You cannot say any longer that the Spirit of God is for just one people. You cannot say, if you are tempted to, that God uses only men; and you can't say God uses only women. You cannot say that God uses only my generation, and would you hurry up and move on. I don't like your music, or whatever else you might add. You can't say that anymore. You can't say God did such great things in my generation; you and your upcoming generation has nothing to accomplish. You can't say that, either, and you can't say, come to think of it, I don't like your music either. You can't say God is only for the wealthy, or God is only for the poor. The Spirit of God is poured out on *all*, and He is poured out, and they prophesy. They dream dreams and see visions.

In the Bible, to be a prophet is not predominately to be a future-teller. To be a prophet in the Bible is to bring God's perspective on your contemporary moment. Often that's informed by God's saving actions in the past and His commitment in the future, but the dominant mission of the prophets and of a prophetic people is to bear witness and testify to their own contemporaries the truths of God. We also experience visions and dreams. What is your vision that Jesus Christ has given you by the Spirit? What is a dream of ministry that He has birthed in your heart, a call for you to act in His name and to be changed from a place of weakness into strength, from a place of cowardice to courage, from being a hidden Christian to a visible one, a silent Christian to a speaking one, changed from being a distracted Christian to being fully engaged with His purpose in the world? That's the effect of the Spirit.

The Spirit comes at Pentecost, and the Spirit of God continues to fill all who call on the Name of Christ. Those who call on the Name of Christ at the end of this first sermon in Acts receive the Spirit. The New Testament tells us to be full of the Spirit. I pray for the filling of the Spirit often

in my own life and at Kenwood. We learn later in the New Testament that the manifestation of the Spirit happens in many diverse gifts, but the bottom line is that we need more of the Holy Spirit.

I remember leading a retreat a few years ago at our church, and we came to a time of prayer at the end of the retreat. I gave what someone told me later was the lamest altar call he'd ever heard. All I said was, "If you need prayer, just come, and we will pray for you." That was it. There wasn't an emotional song or plea; it was just if you want be prayed for we're going to pray for you. I was leading the retreat with a six-foot-five African-American brother, William, and a second-career Procter & Gamble executive from a Presbyterian background, named Vicky. We didn't talk about our prayer plan or anything. We just said if you'd like prayer, come and we will pray for you. I was there next to brother William and Presbyterian Vicky and someone came. The first person just came up, and right as we began to pray for him, I felt a wind about 60 miles an hour behind me. I felt my clothes flapping, and the Spirit of God just rushed upon us. It was so sweet and glorious. I didn't know what else to do but just bury my head. I kept my head down and prayed for people for the next three hours, and the Spirit of God just came. Presbyterian Vicky was speaking words of life into people's lives. She had never done that before. It was a visit from the Lord, and all we did was just ask Him to come. When the Holy Spirit comes, He empowers us to serve Him. He sanctifies us, helps us to be fully engaged.

James Cha was here last Wednesday, and he told many of us a chapter of church history that I had had no knowledge of prior to last Wednesday night. He taught us about the Korean Pentecost in 1907. I knew before this time that Korea was largely an unreached people. He told us about a season of prayer that a small church in Korea entered into for six months, praying that the Spirit of God would do a fresh work in their land. The society was filled with idols, with less than one percent a fledgling Christian community. On Monday night, January 14, 1907, the Spirit of God moved in the land. The coming of the Spirit came and brought deep conviction of sin first. The Spirit of God does not dwell in sinful humanity. We need to be cleansed by the blood of Christ, and one of the first effects of the Spirit was that reserved Koreans were standing up publicly in the church meeting and confessing their sins, weeping, asking forgiveness from one another. They prayed for the outpouring of the Spirit, and the Spirit came with confession. An eyewitness of that, William Blair, wrote that what happened next was that the Christians returned to their homes in the country taking this Pentecostal fire with them. Everywhere the story was told, and the same Spirit flamed forth and spread to practically every church, not only in North Korea, but throughout the entire peninsula this blessing was received. In Pyongyang, special meetings were held in churches for more than a month. Even the schools had to lay aside lessons for days while their children wept over their wrongdoing. The last effect

was that the Spirit of God birthed a burning zeal to make known the merits of the Savior. People declared that there were so many people going around talking about Christ, that some of the non-Christians in these communities said they would have to sell their homes and move to a district where there were no Christians in order to get some rest. Again, quoting from those who lived through this, drunkards, gamblers, adulterers, murderers, thieves, self-righteous, Confucianists, and others, had been made into new people in Christ. In five years, from 1907 to 1911, 80,000 people gave their lives to Christ. By 1912, there were 300,000 Korean church members in a total population of 12 million, The hallmarks of this outpouring of Jesus continue to shape the Christian community in Korea to this day: early morning prayer, study of the Scripture, generous giving, and zeal for evangelism. I would love for God to visit us as individuals and families. The original Pentecost means Jesus is Lord of all the earth. It really means that, and it really means that you and I are part of an end-time, prophetic people. Would you join me in simply praying that God would breathe on us, breathe on me, and give me dreams and visions and help me to live as a prophetic person in these times.

Would you stand, and let's make this our prayer. Holy Spirit of God, we invite you here. We invite you Holy Spirit to fill us up, to breathe new life into us. Holy Spirit, would you refine us, and purify us. Would you abide within us so that Christ might be evident in all that we do. Holy Spirit, would You be at work freely and openly in and through Kenwood Baptist Church. You have visited us before, and we ask You to visit us again in hidden and visible ways that we might become fully engaged into Your mission in the world. We love You, sweet Holy Spirit. Lord Jesus, pour out Your Spirit upon us that this would be a place where culture, gender, generational, and social barriers are crossed under the glorious vision of unity under the Exalted Jesus.

Amen.