Pentecost Sermon

Today I am so happy to share the message about one of the most important days on the church calendar. The reason for its significance is that it is the birthday of the church. It is called Pentecost derived from a Greek word meaning 50 .50 days after Passover a Jewish feast was held to celebrate the harvest. Something amazing happened on this particular Pentecost though, as depicted in the book of acts. Jesus was crucified during Passover in Jerusalem and was resurrected , He then appeared to his disciples and followers at various times during the next 40 days teaching and preparing them Before Jesus ascended to heaven , Jesus gave them some instructions in Acts chapter 1 :4-5 &8 . They were commanded by Jesus to not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father which He said, You have heard from Me. For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. Vs.8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”

After the ascension, they followed Jesus’ instructions by returning to the upper room in Jerusalem and waited for the giving of the Holy Spirit. They waited expectantly during the ten days continuing in prayer and supplication in one accord .In today’s scripture passage we hear the dramatic and miraculous account of the Day of Pentecost and the giving of the Holy Spirit . God had an amazing plan. There were visual and sound effects beyond human imagination .There were tongues of fire and a mighty wind with a loud sound .In the Message bible it says “ Without warning there was a sound like a strong , gale force wind no one could tell where it came from . It filled the whole building. Then like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through the ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them .There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound they came on the run. Then they heard, one after another their own native tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. “

God’s timing set the stage for the maximum audience to hear the message about Christ and begin the spread of Christianity .Pentecost was a Pilgrimage feast requiring the Jews to come and make a grain offering to God in the temple. One of Jesus’ original disciples called Peter became a powerful leader that day , He was same man who as predicted by Jesus denied even knowing him three times .He loved the Lord and thought that he would always remain faithful .Yet, he was terrified after the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus . Despite his devotion, he had betrayed Jesus. 50 days later that same disciple Peter in the 2nd chapter of acts stood up and God spoke through him. That day he boldly preached the gospel and 3000 were converted. Peter’s credentials of being a career fisherman made him an unlikely selection to build the church. What could possibly explain the difference in Peter? He was transformed by the Filling of the Holy Spirit. Accessing and living in the power of the Holy Spirit was life changing in Biblical times, but it is also available to each of us today. In the introduction to the book of Acts in the Message Bible, it says the following: “The story of Jesus doesn’t end with Jesus. It continues in the lives of those who believe in Him. The supernatural does not stop with Jesus. Luke makes it clear that these Christians he wrote about were no more spectators of Jesus than Jesus was a spectator of God – they are in on the action of God. God acting in them, God living in them. Which also means of course in us. “

Fairfield Grace Family we too are in a season of waiting, but we as believers already have the gift of the Holy Spirit. As people of faith, we have hope for the future and not despair. Jeremiah 29: 11 For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord , plans to prosper you and not to harm you , plans to give you a hope and a future . “The gift of the Holy Spirit gives us so many blessings to sustain us during this incredibly challenging time of heartbreaking suffering and loss. We can learn from these early Christians to pray and listen for God’s voice and guidance and to trust. Many of these early Christians believed in the resurrected Christ because they had personally seen Him alive. Our faith and belief in Christ can be strengthened during our time of waiting by personally spending time with Him. Jesus becomes so real, as you read the bible and pray .I have a favorite devotional book that I like to read titled Jesus Calling by Sarah Young. Michelle Krancz introduced it to me. It has been a wonderful blessing.It is written from the perspective of Jesus talking to you each day. The messages are brief but very powerful. They often seem written just for me and what challenges I am facing at that particular time. The message for May 25th is as follows: “The World is too much with you, my child. Your mind leaps from problem to problem, tangling your thoughts in anxious knots. When you think like that, you leave me out of your worldview and your mind becomes darkened .Though I yearn to help, I will not violate your freedom. I stand silently in the background of your mind, waiting for you to remember that I am with you.

When you turn from your problems to My Presence, your load immediately becomes lighter. Circumstances may not have changed but we carry your burdens together. Your compulsion to fix everything gives way to deep, satisfying connection with Me. Together we can handle whatever this day brings. “

This was a perfect message and encouragement during the pandemic that seemed to be just what I needed .

The gift of the Holy Spirit gives us God’s power, God’s presence and God’s purpose. Dr. Charles Stanley says in his sermon, God the Holy Spirit – our Helper the following: Yet some believers may not understand that God in the person of His Spirit has taken residence in them. Instead of living in the Spirit’s power and provisions, they simply do what they can in their own strength and wait for the day that they go to heaven. The result is a dissatisfied life filled with disappointment in God.

However, the problem is not God, but the ignorance of the Holy Spirit’s presence and guidance .All we need to live the Christian life has been deposited within us. If we are willing to yield ourselves to Him, we may freely draw in the resources of the Spirit .Our Divine Helper is always there to attend us in our need. At no point since trusting Jesus as our Savior have we ever been alone or helpless, even if that is how we felt. He is always present and actively working in our lives.

I would like to challenge you to make space for a quiet time daily and listen for God’s voice as He speaks through the Bible .There is a book about the Holy Spirit called The Helper by Catherine Marshall that is a personal favorite . There are many devotionals that are available free online. Being anchored in scripture and positive messages is vitally important. This past year I studied the book of Acts which is a moving account of the spread of Christianity over a 30 year period. It reads like a fantastic, adventure story of devout, unlikely heroes empowered by the Holy Spirit. From biblical times the numbers of Christians have increased exponentially to billions of followers worldwide. My prayer is that during the pandemic that believers would be renewed and recommitted to their relationship with Christ. I also pray that many non believers would seek to know Christ. Let us remember that how we conduct ourselves as Christians during the pandemic is powerful witness to non believers. In Galatians 5 :22-23 , But the fruit of the Spirit is love , joy , peace ,patience , , kindness , goodness , faithfulness ,gentleness , self control ; against such things there is no law .My fruit of the Spirit report card is a work in progress with God’s help.

I would like to close with a meditation from Henri Nouwen that Pastor Cho sent to me last year. “The Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to his followers, is the great gift of God. Without the Spirit of Jesus we can do nothing, but in and through the Spirit we can live free, joyful and courageous lives. We cannot pray, but the Spirit of Christ can pray in us. We cannot create peace and joy, but the Spirit of Christ can fill us with peace and joy that is not of this world. We cannot break through many barriers that divide races, sexes and nations, but the Spirit of Christ unites all people in the all embracing love of God. The Spirit of Christ burns away our many fears and anxieties and sets us free to move wherever we are sent .That is the great message of the Pentecost.”

Amen