

Day of Pentecost + May 28, 2023
Indiana-Kentucky Synod Sermon and Prayers
Pr. Dan Forehand, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry Transition

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

O God, on this day you open the hearts of your faithful people by sending into us your Holy Spirit. Direct us by the light of that Spirit, that we may have a right judgment in all things and rejoice at all times in your peace, through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

A reading from Acts.

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival that marked the fiftieth day after Passover. Luke portrays the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the disciples before the gathered and astonished people assembled in Jerusalem for the festival. Filled with the Spirit, the disciples were able to witness to the power of Christ's resurrection.

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷'In the last days it will be, God declares,

that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.
¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' "

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-23

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

+++++++

Sermon by Pastor Dan Forehand

Grace, mercy, and peace, be yours from our risen and ascended Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

I remember one Sunday before I became a Pastor that I was assigned to be the assisting minister and the lector for Pentecost Sunday. I thought it would be a really exciting opportunity, but I forgot about that first reading.

"Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to

Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.” Who? What? It felt like a trap. Surely, I would mispronounce one of those groups of people and folks would make fun of me forever and ever.

Which is entirely NOT the point of Pentecost.

Because, I imagine in our day today, in a day where we have Google Translate and I can speak into my phone and have it give a perfect translation into just about any language I can imagine, we don't have the same barriers of language. But we still have many barriers don't we.

We divide ourselves politically, socially, racially, economically, denominationally. We divide ourselves by family and ability, by interests and gifts, by a whole host of ways, we seek to be separate.

And sometimes to me it feels like maybe we are speaking different languages. We are speaking different cultures. Our neighbor seems to be nothing like us. Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, seem to be a lot more easy to deal with than that guy who watches a different news channel or that friend who posts that sort of stuff on Facebook.

Which is why I believe we need to embrace the story of Pentecost all the more fully in our current condition. We are different people. Absolutely. 100%. And yet, we gather together to hear the same scriptures. To sit in the same pews. To congregate around the same baptismal font and Table to share the meal. And somehow, in ways that we cannot comprehend, we believe that the Spirit is moving through our gatherings. Somehow, in ways we cannot comprehend, the Spirit is speaking to us despite our differences and giving us visions and dreams and imaginations of a world that God desires for us.

And in a world that is so divided, when the Church dares to come together and say, “we may not agree on everything, but we agree that Jesus is calling us beyond our differences into something that transcends our differences...” When we say that, people will absolutely think that we're out of our minds or drunk or that there's something wrong with us.

In 2015, I had the privilege of preaching at our Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly closing worship on Pentecost and I shared a call and response that I learned from a mentor of mine that invited us to plead for the Spirit to come as it was on Pentecost and transform our hearts and minds and spirits to see beyond what we see before us.

I said, “**Come, Holy Spirit,**” and the gathered community replied, “**Flame on!**” **Come Holy Spirit, Flame On!**

Let's do that together, “**Come Holy Spirit! Flame On!**”

In the midst of what separates us from one another. **Come Holy Spirit! Flame On!**

In the midst of all the ways that we make mistakes and fail each other. **Come Holy Spirit! Flame On!**

In the midst of our doubts and fears and worries. **Come Holy Spirit! Flame On!**

In the midst of all that we get frustrated and overwhelmed with. **Come Holy Spirit! Flame On!**

In the midst of all that we do that goes against the spirit of God. **Come Holy Spirit! Flame On!**

Come Holy Spirit! Flame On!

Come Holy Spirit! Flame On! and inspire our hearts to see beyond ourselves.

Come Holy Spirit! Flame On! and encourage our souls to walk the path that Jesus invites us to journey.

Come Holy Spirit! Flame On! and help us to re-imagine a world that goes beyond what separates us whether we are Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Hoosiers, Kentuckians, Kentuckers, or Kentuckeyites. To re-imagine a world that goes beyond our abilities, the color of the skin, our gender, or anything else that we use to separate ourselves from each other, but to instead see the world that God imagines for us, where tongues of fire ignite us to share the goodness and the grace of God with one another.

Siblings in Christ, **we need Pentecost!** We need the Spirit to move among us and help us to see a world anew. For God remains with us. Loving us. Strengthening us. Supporting us. Walking with us. And that is Good News – you are not alone!

Come Holy Spirit! Flame On! and empower us to be your people and to see the love of God once again.

May we be that church for the world. And may God bless you on the way!

Come Holy Spirit! Flame on! Amen.

+++++

Prayers of Intercession

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Passionate God, you sent your Spirit through the gifts of fire, wind, and word. As you equipped the disciples for their work, equip us to bring the good news to all those who long for you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Restoring God, wind and flame bring life and destruction throughout the world. We pray for those who work with wind energy, for migratory birds, for protection for lands facing destructive fire, for forestry managers and firefighters. Renew the face of the earth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Ever-present God, your spirit embraces all. Send your spirit of understanding to immigrants, refugees, and any experiencing language barriers. Bless the work of translators, ESL teachers, ambassadors, and international peace organizations. Safely guide those fleeing war and danger. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Merciful God, you anoint us with your spirit. Bless nurses, doctors, midwives, chaplains, counselors, and hospice workers as they care for those in need. We pray for all who seek your comfort especially those we name before you now in silence and aloud... Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Generous God, you impart a variety of gifts. Set aflame the desire to learn from one another, especially those who differ from us. Make your presence known through missionaries, peace workers, and through the outreach ministries of our synod and congregations. We pray for our presiding bishop, Liz, and our bishop, Bill, as they help us to work together to see the new things that you, O God are doing. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Life-giving God, we give thanks for those who have died to new life in you. As we observe Memorial Day, we remember those who died in military service. Comfort all who mourn, and usher in a world where war is no more. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ's resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

Amen.

Hear us now, gracious Father, as we pray the words that Jesus has taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

The God who calls across the cosmos
and speaks in the smallest seed
✠ bless, keep, and sustain you
now and to the end of the age.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Share the harvest.
Thanks be to God.

From sundaysandseasons.com.
Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.