

Collect: ALMIGHTY GOD, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

Lessons: Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104:25-35, 37
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13
John 20:19-23

Sermon: This is the day of Pentecost, the Christian Church's birthday. In the Greek calendar, this day is the 50th day after the spring planting and is the first harvest. For the Jews, this is 50 days after Passover and is known and celebrated as the Feast of Weeks, Feast of the Harvest, and Day of the First Fruits. On this day they took two barley loaves of bread made from the first grains and presented them in the temple as a gift from the people to God.

For Christians this marked the day **God gave** and **we received** the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had promised his disciples he would not leave them helpless or alone after his death. He promised he would send them a helper, someone who would be with them and look after them. This helper would teach them, protect them and advocate to God for them. He also promised that anything they asked in his name would be done.

In the lessons of Acts and John is the story of the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

In John, it is days after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the disciples are locked in an upper room in Jerusalem in fear for their safety. They were afraid that the Jews would also take them and put them to death. Suddenly Jesus appeared, in the midst of them, and greeted them with "Peace be with you." The disciples didn't recognize that it was Jesus until he showed them the nail holes in his hands and the spear wound in his side. Then they rejoiced and Jesus breathed on them giving them the Holy Spirit. He also promised that if they forgave or retained the sins of anyone, the sins would be forgiven or retained. Here Jesus bestows forgiveness to the church.

In Acts, the Holy Spirit is given in a more dramatic way. The disciples are locked in the upper room when the Holy Spirit, not Jesus, appears to them. It appears as a roaring wind, I imagine like the sound of a tornado, with flickering flames of fire that enveloped each of the disciples giving each one of them the ability to speak in a different language.

It is the time of the Passover celebration and Jews from throughout the Mediterranean area and parts of Africa have come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples left the locked room and went out to preach in the streets. The people, from all the different countries, were amazed they could hear and understand the disciple preaching about God's deeds in their own native language. Many believed and were converted. Some scoffed in disbelief because the men preaching were uneducated men from Galilee. To the unbelievers, it sounded like gibberish and so they insisted the men were drunk,

Peter raised his voice and said it was only 9 in the morning and the men weren't drunk. He reminded them that God had spoken to the prophet Joel and told him that, one day, he would pour out/or give a portion of his Spirit to everyone. Everyone would be saved. His was that day.

We can imagine that when people returned to their homes, they shared the experience and the message that they had received. And the church was born with the Holy Spirit, God's presence being the foundation and the structure.

Happy Birthday Church!