

5/19/24**The Day of Pentecost****Acts 2:1-13****Pastor David Pranga, Brewster Baptist Church**

Good morning and welcome to Brewster Baptist Church. My name is Pastor David Pranga. I am one of the pastors on staff. I am so glad you are joining us, whether you are watching online or if you are in our beautiful sanctuary. I am personally glad you have made it a priority to be with us today.

This is the season of graduations at all grade levels. Graduation reminds us that our students have learned valuable information or skills. These students have done their homework, studied countless hours, wrote papers, given presentations, and have taken tests to make sure they have mastered the material. Then, one day, we celebrate their accomplishments.

This coming year, my family has two graduations. Our youngest daughter, Hannah, is graduating from eighth grade at Nauset Middle School. My eldest daughter, Rebekah, will be graduating from Colby College next weekend. Christy and I are excited about each of these celebrations. Many of you may know someone who is graduating soon.

Can you imagine forgetting a celebration, a birthday, or even an anniversary? How would it make you feel? You would feel terrible, awful, horrible if you forgot such an important event in your life. I think you would agree that it is never a good thing when you forget something that is so important.

In the life of the church, there are three major celebrations every year. I am not going to test you on it. Can you name these three important celebrations?

Three Major Celebrations:

Christmas – We celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Easter – We celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Pentecost – We celebrate the birth of the church and giving of the Holy Spirit.

Today is the day that we celebrate Pentecost. It happens every year. I know that some of you already know this – because you would never forget such an important celebration in the life of the church. Just in case you do not know the story of Pentecost, I am here to remind you, and teach you a few things about Pentecost and the power of the Holy Spirit.

First, a story:

There was a son that was about to graduate. The family was quite wealthy. The son was expecting a certain materialist gift from his father – a red sports car. He picked it out and gave his dad plenty of hints. The son graduated, and there was a party. After the party was over, his dad called him into the study and told him how much he loved him. The father gave his son a wrapped present.

The son opened the present and found a leather-bound Bible with his name inscribed on the cover. This was not the gift the son wanted. The son was angry. The young man tossed the Bible on his father's desk and stormed out of the room saying, "With all your money, all you could give me was a Bible."

The son never came back to his father's house. They never spoke, despite the father's attempts to contact his son. Years later, the son got a call to say that his dad had died, leaving him everything.

As the son was going through his father's belongings, he found that leather Bible in his father's desk. Curious, the young man took the Bible and started paging through it. The Bible opened to *Matthew 7:11*, "*If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*" As the son read this message, a car key fell out from inside the Bible. It had a tag with the dealer's name on it – for the sports car that he had wanted years earlier. On the tag beside the graduation date read the words, "*PAID IN FULL Love, Dad.*"

Why is Pentecost so important?

Pentecost is the season when we remember God's greatest gift to His disciples and all believers. It is better than a sports car. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. God poured out the Holy Spirit to the believers to help them walk with God.

This morning, I want to set the stage for you. In *Acts 1*, Jesus is with his disciples and other followers. There may be 120 followers at this point following Jesus. They break bread together and have fellowship together. Jesus then begins to teach them one more important lesson. Jesus says, "**Do not leave Jerusalem and wait for the gift my Father has promised, which you have heard me speak about**" (*Acts 1:4*). Jesus continues, "**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.’ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight” (Acts 1:8, 9).

Can you imagine what the disciples and followers must have felt upon hearing the news? Jesus is eating with his disciples. Life is good. They are all back together. Jesus is still teaching them, and Jesus starts talking about a gift that they will receive. This gift is powerful. Then, the next minute, Jesus is ascending to heaven.

What does Jesus say to them? I want you to stay in Jerusalem. I am going to give you a powerful gift. You will be my witnesses to Jerusalem and beyond. At this point, the disciples do not understand or comprehend what Jesus is talking about.

At the same time this is going on, there is a great Jewish festival happening in Jerusalem called the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. This would happen 50 days after Passover – or now, Easter. Every Jewish male would come back to Jerusalem to be part of this festival. People would travel from far lands to participate in this celebration. This was a joyous occasion. This was a time when the people expressed thanks to God for his provisions.

These two events are happening at the same time – which takes us to the main text: **“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind [HOLY SPIRIT] came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire [PRESENCE OF GOD] that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues [LANGUAGES] as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-4).**

The coming of the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit comes like wind and fire upon the believers.

The disciples and followers were in the upper room. They were all together just like Jesus asked them to be.

The text said a blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house. The *wind represents the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit came from God, and it engulfed and filled the whole house. It was the gift that Jesus had talked about. God fills

the entire place with His presence – the Holy Spirit. No one has any doubt. God does not share the house with anyone or anything else.

The second symbol is fire. *Fire in the Old Testament signified the Holy presence of God.* When have you seen fire before in the Bible? The burning bush, the pillar of fire, and the hovering fire over the tabernacle in the wilderness. The fire of the Holy Spirit creates a *passion that moves you forward*, aligning you with God's will.

Fire also represents purification. The Holy Spirit wants to purify and cleanse us to become holy. This was happening to the disciples at the same time. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The disciples and followers received, and were filled with, the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that changed the disciples and followers. As a group they were timid. They lacked courage and confidence with Jesus. Now, we see them speak with boldness and courage like they never had before. They now had a passion to share about Jesus. This is because the power of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in their heart.

I think of Peter at the cross. What did Peter do? He denied knowing Jesus three separate times. He was afraid to say he was a follower of Jesus, or even that he knew Jesus. As you continue through the book of Acts, you see Peter and the disciples lead with boldness and courage as they witness and share the good news about Jesus. We see Peter preach and 3,000 people become followers of Jesus. The Spirit is powerful. They began to speak in tongues/languages as they witnessed to people. There was a great festival that was happening. There were many different people groups that had arrived from everywhere. There was a language barrier. God used these disciples to communicate the love of God to the Jewish people. God, in his infinite wisdom, gave the disciples the power to speak in other languages or tongues to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. They praised God. They shared their testimony.

We need to move on to *Acts 2:5-13*:

"Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native

language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

The text said that the Holy Spirit came like a violent wind from heaven. Everyone must have heard this sound. The Holy Spirit did not come gently in. It must have been loud. People came out of their houses. A crowd formed in bewilderment. What happened?

The disciples started speaking in their native languages to the people to whom they were talking. This must have been a shock to everyone there. It must have shocked the disciples, and it must have shocked all different people groups.

How do the people respond to the disciples as they shared the wonders of God in their own languages? We see three responses. Some were amazed at what they heard. Others were just perplexed; still others made fun of the disciples, saying, “Maybe they had too much wine.”

The responses do not surprise me at all. How do people respond when you share your faith? Some people are curious or amazed. Some people are perplexed and have more questions. Some think that this whole Christianity thing is ridiculous, wondering how anyone can believe in Jesus.

Why is the story of Pentecost so important?

The Father has given the individual the Holy Spirit

Jesus fulfills his promise to us in *Acts 1:4*. Jesus promised the believers a gift. The gift is the Holy Spirit. The good news is that God gives us that same Spirit. *All we need to do is believe in Jesus, confess our sins and that we fall short of God’s holiness, and accept Jesus into our life.* As believers in Jesus, we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells us. We can speak to God and the Holy Spirit can speak to us.

The Holy Spirit is there to teach us, guide us, and direct us in our life. The Holy Spirit is there to give us wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. The Spirit gives us comfort and fills us with love and joy.

The Holy Spirit is there to purify us to become more holy, like Jesus. There are times when the Holy Spirit will bring things to our mind that we need to change. It may be a habit that is unhealthy. It could be an anger or pride issue. Each of us has issues that God wants us to work on. There are times in our life when the Holy Spirit tells us we need to change. Why? God loves us and he does not want us to stay in sin. He wants us to change and become like him. He uses the Holy Spirit to purify us and bring us closer to God. That is an incredibly good thing.

We also see the Holy Spirit come in power. Remember the disciples who were timid, shy, and lacking confidence? When the presence and power of the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, they became more confident. They exhibited courage. They had boldness in their preaching and shared the word of God. It was all because of the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. That power is available to us as well.

The Birth of the Church – Witnessing

Pentecost marks the day when the believers and followers of Christ became the church. As you continue to read the books of Acts, you see the church continue to grow in number. Jesus shared with the disciples in *Matthew 28* that they were to “go and make disciples.” In *Acts 1:8*, Jesus tells them they are to be “witnesses to Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth.” The disciples and followers took Christ’s words to heart. The church grew.

I still find it amazing that Jesus left ordinary believers to continue the mission of the church. God trusts us to continue the mission of the church. What is the mission of the church? We are to go and share the good news of Jesus. We are to be praising God. We should be sharing our testimony. We are to be his witnesses and sharing what God has done in our life. The good news is that God gave us the power of the Holy Spirit to help us.

What does that look like? How can we be witnesses for Christ?

Have you ever had this experience? You went out to eat at an excellent restaurant. This restaurant was brand new; you just happened to go the first weekend they opened.

The place looked beautiful. The wait staff were cheerful and helpful. The meal comes out quicker than you expected. The food tasted delicious. Throughout your time there, the server made you feel special. What do you do on Monday at work? You share about the impressive experience at the restaurant. You rave about the quality and taste of the food. You share about how the staff was helpful, kind, and nice. You may even mention the place was very cozy and charming.

When we witness, or share our faith with people, we are simply sharing with them our experience with God. It may seem uncomfortable at first, to bring it up to your friend or neighbor. Remember, you have the power of the Holy Spirit that helps you in conversation. You are not alone. We have the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us. We do not have all the answers to everyone's questions. We are just sharing about our relationship with Jesus.

How do we witness to our family, friends, or co-workers?

First, we just have to say the obvious. It can be difficult or frightening bringing up the conversation about our faith to people we care about and love. Many of us are afraid of what they might say or think about us. I get it; at times I feel the same way. That is how the disciples felt before they had the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can help us overcome our nervousness and move forward and share.

Second, I would just encourage you to mix your faith into the conversations you have with people. Let people know you attend church, small group Bible study, or serve in ministry at BBC. Let people know you have a relationship with God. One of the ways my wife shares her faith is by letting her co-workers know that she is praying for them and that she is praying for the kids she is working with. I have found that people want us to pray for them. People welcome our prayers.

You might have a friend going through a challenging time in their life. It is great when you take the time to listen. If the Spirit leads you, take the next step and share about a time you were going through a painful experience – how you turned to God. It was God who helped you in the struggle or painful situation. It was my small group that I turned to for help. They were there to support me and help me out.

Do you know the number one reason people check out a church? It is not by digital ads, radio ads, or commercials. The most effective way people come to church is when someone invites them. You can also suggest having brunch together afterwards.

For some of us, we do not feel comfortable sharing our faith. We do not know where to start. We might be afraid that we might mess up. We think there is no way that God could use us. I would just say this phrase – “come and see”.

Just invite people to come to church along with you. Our church has so many events that you can invite people to. Let other people do the work of sharing their faith. We have a Men’s Luncheon this Thursday. There will be a person sharing their testimony. You just need to invite them to lunch here at church. Let others share the good news. This summer we have VBS. It is a wonderful way to invite other young families to our church. In July, we will have two music concerts that will be awesome. Just invite people to come with you. If you like Sunday morning service, just invite people to come and join you. There are many ways that we can witness to people. These are valuable opportunities we can invite people to without saying too much. Remember the words, “come and see”.

A story:

Wishing to encourage her young son’s progress on the piano, a mother took her boy to a Paderewski concert. After they were seated, the mother spotted a friend in the audience and walked down the aisle to greet her. Seizing the opportunity to explore the wonders of the concert hall, the little boy rose and eventually explored his way through a door marked "NO ADMITTANCE." When the house lights dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that the child was missing.

Suddenly, the curtains parted, and spotlights focused on the impressive Steinway on stage. In horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy’s ear, "Don’t quit. Keep playing." Then leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in the bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child, and he added a running obligato. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. The audience was mesmerized.

When I read this story, it reminds me that I am not alone. There are times when I feel like the young boy at the piano. When I share my faith, I am not sure if God can use

it. What we need to remember is that we have the power of the Holy Spirit, like a master pianist. The Spirit comes along side us and helps us to make beautiful music. Amen.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. What parts of the world have you traveled to where you wish you knew the native tongue? Or, if you could speak another language fluently, which one would you choose?
2. Jesus promised the believers that the Father would give them a gift (*Acts 1:4-8*), which is the Holy Spirit. In what ways is Jesus' promise fulfilled in this passage?
3. Describe the physical manifestations of the Holy Spirit coming (*Acts 2:2, 3*). What was the importance of wind and fire?
4. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Why did God pour out his spirit among the believers? What does the Holy Spirit do in our life?
5. There was a great festival going on in Jerusalem at this time. How does the Holy Spirit empower these disciples to be witnesses to the entire world? How did the God-fearing Jews visiting Jerusalem react when they heard Christians speaking their languages? Besides being amazed, how did the crowd react to the unusual happening they witnessed?
6. The Holy Spirit lives inside each of us as believers. What message do you share as you witness to others? Where in your life do you need the power of the Holy Spirit?