

Pentecost Sunday

May 23, 2021

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

Pastor Tyson Labuhn

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We have reason to celebrate today! Not just because government authorities have started to ease up on the COVID restrictions so that those who are vaccinated might freely sing without masks at our indoor worship service once again...there's another reason to celebrate! And that's because we're celebrating the birth of the Christian Church. And we see the beginning of the church prophesied by Ezekiel in our Old Testament reading. Speaking on behalf of God said that those dead, dried up bones were the whole house of Israel, who said, ***"Our bones are dried-up, and our hope is lost; we're indeed cut off."*** It was the "Son of Man" who spoke to them, so that there might be life in them, and it was only after The Spirit was placed within them, that they came together to live as God had intended...

In the book of Acts, St. Peter was moved by that same Spirit to stand up and speak about the truth of God's promise from the book of Joel, that God would pour out His Spirit, which happened on that first day of Pentecost, and that ***"...it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."*** (Acts 2:17, 21 (Joel 2:28-32). This is the truth of God's love for us. And because the Spirit is with us, whether we'd like to admit it or not, He's the One who encourages us to sing, rejoice, praise, and worship!

But if you recall, it was also in the upper room that Jesus first gathered His disciples together to encourage them before He left. Jesus knew how easily they could become divided by conflict. And He knew the effect that His death on the cross would have on them. So He promised to send them the Helper to convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Him; concerning righteousness, because He went to the Father; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Now, many, many generations after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, each of us would be lost and condemned if not for the Holy Spirit. Because it's the Holy Spirit who still helps us to realize just how divisive our sins can be, our great need for God's righteousness, and the judgment to come. And yet, the Spirit guides us in God's divine truth, which we, along with the rest of the world, need more than ever.

So, if today is the church's birthday, don't you think there ought to be a party? You might think that the church's birthday would be a big deal, like Christmas or Easter! But I haven't seen any announcements in stores of a countdown leading up to Pentecost, like at Christmas. And I haven't seen any commercials as we saw around Easter. Neither did I see them before the pandemic either. But I did see something close. It was in the nursery department at Home Depot. When I found PENTAS on sale (... for those of you that don't know, [and that included me until I looked it up] pentas are bushy, rounded perennials with clusters of red, pink, purple, or white star-shaped flowers.) It was the only hint that I ever received from a store concerning the church's birthday. Because you might ask, *"How much does a PENTA COST?"* Well, at least that's about as close as Pentecost is going to be commercialized...

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That new life begins for us at Baptism when the water mixed with the Word is poured out on us and the Holy Spirit comes to work in our hearts. It’s His Spirit that works within us to bring forgiveness, life, and salvation. And not only do we receive that forgiveness, but we share it with others. I do want you to know that regardless of the pandemic restrictions, the church has and continues to perform baptisms. And all of us can look forward to seeing another baptism once again in person.

You know, Aelred of Rievaul (Alred of Revoux), a 12th-century abbot once said, *“Today’s holy seriousness puts new heart into us, for not only do we revere its dignity, but we also experience it as delightful. On this feast, it is love that we especially honor, and among human beings, there is no word pleasanter to the ear, no thought more tenderly dwelt on, than love.”*

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