

# The Festival of Pentecost

Hymns: 224, 232, 231, 236

## THE INTROIT

(Wis.1:7; Ps.68:1,3)

*P: The Spirit of the Lord filleth the world:*

**C: Hallelujah!**

*P: Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God:*

**C: Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!**

*P: Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered:*

**C: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.**

## THE COLLECT

O God, who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people by sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.

## The FIRST LESSON

**Joel 2:28-32**

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

## THE GRADUAL

(Ps.104:30; Liturgical text)

*P: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!*

*P: Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created:*

**C: and Thou renewest the face of the earth. Hallelujah!**

*P: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful:*

**C: and kindle in them the fire of Thy love. Hallelujah!**

## The EPISTLE

**Acts 2:1-13**

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and

Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Psalm 104:30)

*P: Hallelujah! Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created:*

**C: and Thou renewest the face of the earth. Hallelujah!**

**The HOLY GOSPEL**

**St. John 14:23-31**

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

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Joel 2:28-32 — “Before the Great and the Terrible Day of the LORD Come”

INTRODUCTION

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II. BEFORE THE GREAT AND THE TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD COME

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# The Festival of Pentecost

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Joel 2:28-32 — “Before the Great and the Terrible Day of the LORD Come”

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

Today is the Festival of Pentecost and the appointed Old Testament Reading is Joel 2:28-32:

**And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## INTRODUCTION

It seems that every year I have to remind myself why the Festival of Pentecost is called Whitsunday, or White Sunday. The liturgical color is red, for the tongues of fire through which the Holy Spirit manifested His presence upon the apostles. Yet this Sunday is called Whitsunday. It bears this name because of the white robe of righteousness received by the saints of God in connection with Baptism. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church and upon the world so that the righteousness that is by faith would be proclaimed throughout the world for the salvation of all who would hear and have faith generated within them. On this day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit, three thousand heard the Gospel and were turned in their hearts so that they received the promise of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit through Baptism. Thus this day has been named Whitsunday, the day of the white robes with which the saints are clothed. In the reading from the prophet Joel the promise is given with regard to this blessed day, **“And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.”** This is the central section of today’s text, yet it seems that it is seldom addressed in the preaching. It seems appropriate that we should do so today.

## I. AND IT SHALL BE AFTERWARD, I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH

Our text begins with the words, **“And it shall be afterward, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.”**

The extent of this promise is enormous, for this is the promise that the preaching of the Gospel has no limits. Before Jesus had been born as the Incarnate Word or the Word made flesh,

the preaching of the Gospel was somewhat restricted as to locality. There is only one Christ. He was promised to Adam and Eve and to all the saints throughout history. The Christ was promised to the descendants of Abraham and then of David. He was promised to the people whom the LORD had bound to the land of promise and especially to the locality of Mount Zion and the city of peace, that is, Jerusalem. Here God established His temple. Here God established the central place of sacrifice for the remission of sins.

The Gospel is and always has been specific in nature. It has one and only one source. That source is the LORD Himself. The LORD is God. He is both Creator and Redeemer. He is the one who comes to His creation with words of judgment that are intended to call sinners unto repentance and salvation.

This good news, or Gospel, has always been intended for all who need it, namely, the entire sinful human race. The Gospel was first preached in the presence of the first two who rebelled and sinned against the Word of God. It was preached to them, and through them it was preached to the world. No limits were placed upon it by God in terms of who would receive it and pass it on to the future generations. Yet limits were placed upon its preaching. Sinful people rejected its inestimable value and turned aside from it. They did not abide in its promises and thereby failed to proclaim it and teach it to their children and grandchildren. And so only the few, the remnant of the LORD, continued in the Holy Communion of the Gospel. While the Gospel was and is intended for all, only a few received it and continued in it.

When so many people had rejected it that the last of the saints, Noah and his family, were threatened with extinction, the LORD baptized them with worldwide flood that washed the rebellion of unbelief from the earth. With Noah the Gospel was preserved for future generations.

By the time of Abraham, once again the world had turned aside from the pure Gospel, polluting it and interpreting the Word of God for themselves. Like with Noah, the LORD called one man apart from the rest, a man through whom the promise of the Savior would be kept alive. The promise was made to Abraham that through his Seed all the world would be blessed.

This Gospel was preserved even through the time of slavery in Egypt. It was preserved through the many times of rebellion of the people of Israel. It was preserved through the times of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. Through all of these times, the Holy Spirit was at work, preserving the remnant, so that a few continued in the true faith until the Lord Jesus was born into the world. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached through this remnant, who clung to the promise and the life of worship that the LORD had established in the Temple services in Jerusalem.

But the limitless reach of the Gospel was also continually preached. Thus through the prophet Joel we hear:

**And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.**

The Gospel is not given for only a few, even though only a few will receive it. For only the Holy Spirit has the power to create faith in the soul. Since most insist that faith is their own work, they soon pervert it and twist it so that it ceases to be the work of the LORD. They create their own versions of the truth and of the faith. But the few cling to what God has promised and

what God has fulfilled. For these few, the faith remains changeless. For them the faith is received as what God alone can do, and since they receive it from Him, it remains pure and truly effective to do what God promises. And now that God has fulfilled the redemption of the world through the meritorious and sacrificial suffering and death of Jesus, now the Holy Spirit is poured out freely to all who will receive Him through the ordained means of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit goes forth into all the world.

## II. BEFORE THE GREAT AND THE TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD COME

Many years before Jesus was born into the world, many years before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, Joel foretold this marvelous event. His prophecy included these often neglected words:

**And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.**

Even those who have taken the time and effort to expound upon these words, even these few seem to neglect the primary point of the text. Somehow they seem not to perceive what this great and terrible day of the LORD is.

Thus they rightly perceive that this text makes a connection to events of the past. They rightly perceive that the terrible plagues that the LORD used to redeem His people from Egypt are represented here. They rightly grasp the connection to the many terrible wars and acts of violence that have occurred in the past, and also that will continue until the final day of Judgment at Christ's Second Advent. They rightly comment on the fact that some of the most villainous crimes against humanity and some of the most frightening disasters have occurred in connection with eclipses of the sun and moon, when the sun has grown dark and the moon turned blood red. Yet they seem unable or perhaps unwilling to make the connection that Joel proclaims in our text.

How is it that hardly anyone seems to realize that Joel is preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified? How is it that these signs of which Joel preaches are not perceived as occurring on the day of the LORD's crucifixion and death? When the Lord Jesus hung on the cross, did not the sun turn into darkness and the moon to blood? Were there not wonders in the heavens and in the earth? For three hours the sun turned to darkness, from midday until three in the afternoon! When the Lord Jesus gave up His spirit the very earth trembled and shook! The curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom! Saints who had been long buried came forth from their tombs as the earthquake split open their graves! Those who observed these occurrences were filled with fear! A few openly declared acknowledgment of the Son of God!

Moreover, Jesus is spoken of in both the Old Testament and the New Testament as the Sun of Righteousness. Malachi records:

**For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the**

**LORD of hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (Malachi 4:1-6)**

Luke records the birth of John the Baptizer, saying:

**And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:67-79)**

And in the Revelation given to John the Lord Jesus Himself declares:

**I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star. (Revelation 22:16)**

So we have the Lord Jesus declared to be the “Sun of Righteousness” and “the dayspring from on high” and “the bright morning star.” Of this one who shines forth as the light and life of men we also are told: “**For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

On the cross, God made the Sun of righteousness to be turned to darkness. The very darkness that overshadowed the sun in the sky at midday came upon the Lord Jesus and the darkness of sin filled Him to the point that He was made to be sin for us. God Himself hung on the cross as a sinner and died with the penalty of sin in His own body. Is this not a terrifying day? Can this possibly be called anything less than the great and terrible day of the LORD?

This is the day of judgment for all of mankind. In the body of Christ all of mankind was judged. Christ took our sin and was damned so that we would be declared righteous for His sake. The judgment has come. The great and terrible day of the LORD has come upon the earth so that the very foundations have been shaken and the sun turned to darkness. It is as the Lord Jesus proclaimed earlier to Nicodemus:

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:16-21)**

God's gift has been given. The day of judgment has come as God Himself took our judgment for us. All that remains is the judgment that men bring upon themselves by refusing to receive this wondrous judgment gift that is in the body of Christ.

III. IN MOUNT ZION, IN JERUSALEM, AND IN THE REMNANT WHOM THE LORD SHALL CALL

**And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.**

How marvelous! The LORD Himself pronounces the judgment that we deserve upon Himself so that He is free to pronounce to us the judgment that belongs to Him alone, the judgment of righteousness and holiness. Thus He declares that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered.

Is it not strange that so many take these words and attempt to apply them apart from the context in which they have their meaning and power? The LORD Himself makes it unmistakably clear that calling upon the name of the LORD so as to be delivered is very specific and very narrowly defined. He says: **“for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”**

This calling on the name of the LORD does not originate with the sinners who call upon Him. Heavens no! The LORD is the author and perfecter of faith. The LORD, through the working of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace is the one who changes the hearts and minds of sinners so that they acknowledge their need for God's redemption in Christ Jesus and therefore fall on their faces, confessing their unworthiness, and receiving the deliverance that is found only in the remnant whom the LORD calls to true faith.

This is not a choice that we make. This is not a decision that we decide. This is the LORD's doing. It is His work and His alone. He comes to us through the preaching of the pure Gospel. He does not come through some other Gospel. He does not come through preaching that has “enough of the Gospel that men may be saved.” He comes through the preaching of the pure Gospel, for only the pure Gospel proclaims nothing other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

This Gospel is preached only by those whom the LORD has called, the remnant, the tiny few who by the Holy Spirit's work trust not in themselves but in the merits of Christ. Only these whom the LORD has called, only these few have been given the authority or power to preach the

saving Gospel and to administer the Sacraments of salvation. For salvation does not come through corrupted means. Salvation comes only through the Word of God, Jesus, the Christ. Jesus is not corrupted. He took our sin for us and died in our place, but He rose from the dead leaving our corruption behind. He ascended to the throne of God and lives and reigns on our behalf. He sent His Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and convert us to the true faith so that we would be incorporated into His body of holiness and perfection in which sin and death and the power of the devil have no place whatsoever.

Thus all who are gathered by the Holy Spirit into this one holy catholic and apostolic Church gather in absolute confidence. They truly know the peace of God that surpasses all understanding because they know beyond any doubt that what they have they have received from God Himself and not through anything that they have done or contrived for themselves. This is the promise of Pentecost. This is the power of the gift of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

#### CONCLUSION

Is this not the most wonderful news that could possibly be preached? The Holy Spirit has been poured out just as God promised of old and as the Lord Jesus promised repeatedly, even with His last words to His disciples before ascending to heaven. He has promised to give us the Holy Spirit without measure in Baptism. All whom the Holy Spirit gathers to the true Church where the Gospel is preached purely and the Sacraments are administered in accord with Christ's command, all without exception receive this gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and all the blessings that God bestows through His Holy Spirit. All of the gifts of the spirit, all of the fruits of the spirit, all that we need is made to be ours in Baptism. With the Holy Spirit dwelling within us and urging us onward in the true faith, we are filled with a holy and insatiable desire for the Sacrament of Life in Christ. And so we gather as often as possible to hear again the holy absolution and the preaching of the blessed Gospel and to eat and drink the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. This is the life that God has promised to all the world. This is the life to which we have been called to partake. God grant that others also may be made to be partakers both through us and with us. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.