

## **PENTECOST SUNDAY**

**Acts 2: 1-11**

**John 20: 19-23**

**1 Corinthians 12: 3B-7, 12-13**

### **1. Acts 2: 1-11**

- Jesus' Paschal Mystery: Passion, Death, Resurrection, Appearances, Ascension, Sending Spirit. It is one great event of our salvation. The Gospel writers portray the various facets of this event in different ways. Mark does not include a separate Ascension and Pentecost. He barely has appearances. Matthew does not have Ascension or Pentecost, but a Great Commissioning which implies both. Luke/Acts has two accounts of the Ascension and Pentecost in Acts. The Appearances are very important to Luke and he gives them forty days to transpire. Pentecost happens on the fiftieth day. For John, the Ascension and Sending of the Spirit happen on Easter Sunday between the appearance to Mary Magdalene in the morning and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in the evening.
- The Jewish feast of Pentecost was a thanksgiving harvest feast that commemorated the giving of the Law and the establishment of the covenant on Mount Sinai. Luke transforms the Christian Pentecost into a celebration of the new covenant and the gift of the Spirit that frees us from the constraint of the law.
- "There came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind:" The Hebrew word for Spirit is "ruah" which also means wind. In Genesis, at creation the spirit or the wind hovers over the abyss. The wind/spirit is a creative force that will bring order to chaos. In John 3:8, in his talk with Nicodemus, Jesus associates the spirit with wind. The strong driving wind of Pentecost signals a new creative force by God in the world.
- "Tongues of fire:" When God revealed himself on Mt. Sinai to Israel, the Lord came down upon Sinai in fire with smoke all around. Here God the Holy Spirit reveals self in fire to signal the establishment of a new covenant and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- "They began to speak in different tongues:" There seems to be two meanings of tongues here. First, it seems like the charismatic gift of tongues in which a person praises God in a language that only God understands. Then it seems that the variety of tongues means that the disciples spoke in their own language but were understood by everyone in their own language.
- The harmonizing of the languages represents the universal mission of the Church to all peoples, both Jews and Gentiles.
- It also recalls the story of the Tower of Babel in which God confused the languages of humans because they were undertaking a project in order to make them independent of God. They would escape any future flood by building a tower. At Pentecost, the Spirit harmonizes the languages of the world so that the Good News of Jesus' saving Death and Resurrection can be heard and believed by all.

- The harmonization of the languages also represents the Spirit's gift of unity in diversity. The apostles speak in their own language and are understood in each person's language. The diversity of the languages is not made uniform but respected. There is unity in diversity just as the gifts of the Spirit are diverse but harmonized by the Spirit.

## 2. **John 20: 19-23**

- This apparition of the Risen Lord Jesus happens on the evening of the first Easter. It is presumed that Jesus has already ascended to the Father and is now returning to impart the Spirit upon them.
- Jesus meets the disciples where they are. They are afraid and unbelieving. The locked doors symbolize their closed hearts. The message of Mary Magdalene has had little impact on them. They are still traumatized by the crucifixion and death of Jesus and, quite possibly, their abandonment of him in his hour of greatest need. Jesus comes through the locked doors. He breaks through their emotional barriers. John is also trying to describe the reality of the resurrected body of the Lord. He is spirit enough to pass through a door, but also physical enough to let Thomas touch his wounds.
- The wounds of Jesus show that he is the one who was crucified. Thus, there is continuity between his death and his resurrection. It is because he died on the cross that he was raised up. By his wounds we were healed, as Isaiah says. The risen Lord still carries his wounds in his glorified body as a sign that it was through his obedience to the father that he brought healing and salvation to us.
- "Peace be with you!" Shalom means more than just a greeting or a good wish. Jesus is wishing them the peace that has restored them to a relationship with God that had been broken by sin. Like it says in the Prologue, he has given them the power to become children of God. He is really saying: Peace is with you! The restoration of their relationship with God which brings peace has become reality through his death. What Jesus said at the Last Supper is proven true. They would be sad for a while and the world would rejoice. But then they would have joy that no one could take away from them. This joy is the joy of God protecting them from all the trouble of the world.
- "As the Father sent me so I send you!" He now commissions the disciples to carry on his mission. They will leave the locked room and go out into the world. They will be sent by Jesus just as Jesus was sent by God.
- "He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit!" The word "breathe" is the same word used when God breathed life into Adam at creation. Therefore, Jesus' breathing on them is a sign of the New Creation.
- This New Creation and their mission will be that of reconciliation and healing. They have power to forgive and retain sins. The sin that John speaks of is the sin of not believing that Jesus is the Son of God and all the evil that flows from that. They will have power to admit believers into the community through baptism. And power to keep apart those who refuse to believe and work against them.

### 3. **1 Corinthians 12: 3B-7, 12-13**

- In the church of Corinth there were many factions. Some members thought they were better than others. They thought they were more sophisticated and learned and, therefore, were more advanced spiritually. They prided themselves on spiritual gifts, like speaking in tongues, and looked on them as badges of greater holiness.
- Paul asserts that everyone who acknowledges Jesus as Lord does so because of the Spirit in them. One who curses Jesus is not speaking by the Spirit. If a person acknowledges Jesus as Lord, then they do so by the Spirit. Therefore, everyone in the church community that acknowledges Jesus is of the Spirit. Certain members of the community do not have a monopoly on the Spirit.
- Paul is teaching the community that gifts of the Spirit are not given for personal privilege but for service. The Spirit gives gifts as the Spirit wills. Each gift is given for a purpose or a benefit for the community. The gifts are different but not better than others. There is no competition or comparison.
- He compares the gifts of the Spirit to the human body. The body is made up of many parts but is one body. So it is with the Church. We are many—Jews, Gentiles, slaves and free—but we are one body because we have all received the same baptism. We have one Spirit which is the principle of unity.