

Pentecost 2016
Pentecost- The Big Event
St. Andrew's Church – Jacksonville, OR
By Rev. Mr. Bill Baker

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17).

We put so much into our Christmas and Easter celebrations. Everyone, even non-Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter. We pull out all the stops on these glorious days of obligation. We decorate, make special meal plans, sing our favorite hymns and even add some extra special movements to our ceremonies. But, for most, the Christian community included, this is the end of Christian celebrations until next Christmas.

But for us here at St. Andrew's the Christian life is more than the pomp and circumstance of festive holidays. Christmas is the celebration of the Word of God made flesh and the Joy of Christ as the first step of God to atone for our sins. Easter reminds us of the next stage of our redemption, being so much more than a day for children to find the hidden eggs of an Easter bunny. To pay the penalty for our sins Christ would suffer at our very hands, give up his earthly life and then...from power on high...rise to life immortal signifying our Lord's ultimate kingship and power having paved the way for us to overcome the world through Him.

But there is more to Christ than Christmas and Easter isn't there. There is more to lives spent in his service than mere celebration and parties. Oh, we should be celebrating...with great joy! But let's not miss the rest of the story. Simply understanding Christ in a manger or Christ on the Cross is not the full picture.

For those who came to our Ascension Day service we found that the birth and resurrection of Jesus was not the end of His work. The Ascension would be necessary to get the Word out...to spread the Gospel. But, once Christ had ascended and was no longer with us how

would this be possible? Have faith brothers and sisters...God is not making this up as he goes. *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever..."* Another comforter... What would have happened had Christ not ascended? Would He still be walking around today as a 2000 year old man? For Christ to carry out the next phase of Redemption He had to ascend that He might abide in us all! This Comforter, the paraclete that would come from the Father is Christ, not living next door to us, but IN us. *"...whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"*

How great and glorious is this! Can you imagine anything of a greater magnitude? God makes His first move to save mankind by becoming one of us that he might teach us and give us hope. Then, through His suffering on the Cross He gives up the ghost and rises to life again after three days. And He doesn't stop there! After forty days spent with us in His resurrected body He ascends to the right hand of the Father from whence He came. Christ has taken back the world and assumed His rightful place. Christ is in heaven...with the Father. Now, if it had ended there what would that have meant for us? Well, I would venture to say that without the Holy Spirit in us, we would not be able to live for Christ at all and would eventually fall to the whim of any wayward system of belief. But that was not, nor is not, God's purpose for us! God's purpose for us is to be heirs with Him and abide with Him for all eternity in a capacity that we cannot even come close to imagining. Any attempt to do so only diminishes the truth of our future existence. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is significant because this is the point in which we become part of the Son...Christ in us and we made one body in Him.

It is so sad that Pentecost, the birthday of the church...the coming of the Holy Spirit is passed by pretty much unnoticed by non-Christians and Christians alike. I am here today to tell you that Pentecost is the BIG EVENT! And I'll give you my two cents as to why.

Until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was poured out on mankind we had no power to live for or even understand the Gospel of Salvation. Today we are made living members incorporate in the mystical body of Christ, today we are made brothers and sisters in Christ, today we are

able to hear the still small voice of the Almighty guiding us in the ways of righteousness, today we are able to accept eternal and everlasting life; and why...because the spirit of Jesus Christ now rests within each of us. The same spirit who moved upon the waters in Genesis and put the word of God in Mary's womb, is the same spirit that rested on the disciples 2000 years ago and is moving today in the hearts and minds of those, who by grace, have accepted Jesus as Saviour! Pentecost is the BIG EVENT!

Brian Doerkesen, in one of his contemporary songs, wrote these great words; "Refiner's fire, my hearts one desire is to be holy, set apart by you my master ready to do your will"; It is no wonder that the Holy Spirit comes as a burning flame. The fire of Pentecost signifies the purging of ones soul to expose the truth of Christ within us. Christ is the flame that exposes our sinful natures and through the fire of Holy Spirit burns away the impurities that lie in the deepest recesses of our hearts, our minds and our souls. If Christ is not in us then sin will grow like weeds overtaking a garden choking out the good plants. If Christ is not in us then the weeds of our sins in this current world will become so familiar that they will become the native plants that dominate our lives. What's wrong will be accepted as tolerance, what's right will be seen as narrow-mindedness.

When mankind turned from God in the Garden and began to look to his own way, God put a plan in motion that would redeem the human race from its offensive use of freewill. As we can see, from the very beginning, God does not meet us half way...he comes the whole way to lead us back to the path of righteousness. The Holy Spirit was not sent by the Father to 'point' the way to salvation but to 'lead' the way to Salvation...and where he leads we must, by faith, follow.

And we must follow the natural course of lives lived in defiance of God...the path that leads to death; but our deaths will not be the death of sinners; we have been forgiven, we are redeemed! He is risen...and we in Christ...are risen with Him! And if we are with Him in His resurrection then we too are with Him in His Ascension where Christ is at the right hand of the Father. And how is this possible? Because the Father sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter to live within everyone who hears his still small voice and responds. Note that heaven, in the Bible,

is not a distant spiritual location unrelated to our world, but rather another unseen, physical dimension of God's good creation that overlaps, and even intersects, with earth. Given this, Jesus ascends to heaven, not to escape earth, but rather to reign over it until He returns to re-create it. And make no mistake...the Holy Spirit is not idle within us. We, as the children of God, we who have answered the call, we who have become one body in Christ, have been given a responsibility while we await the final judgment and return of Jesus Christ; that responsibility...to spread the good news, to lead moral lives that edify our Lord and Saviour, to be doers of the word and not hearers only, to visit the fatherless and widows, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, to provide for the basic needs of others. Probably the best statement of our Christian commitment to our Father in heaven comes from Psalm 1:

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3).

Pentecost is the final stage of God's redemptive grace unto mankind. Pentecost is the birth of the Christian Church because Pentecost marks the moment that the work of Jesus Christ is manifested in mankind through the power of the Holy Spirit. The work of Jesus Christ is continued in each one of us through the power of the Holy Ghost. We reign with Christ the head, as living members of His Body. May the power of the Holy Ghost be an ever-present force in the life you are living for Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.