

Praise God for Our Pentecost Heritage

 **God pours out His Spirit.**

 **Our sons and daughters prophesy.**

In the name of Jesus, who promised and sent the Holy Spirit, dear fellow heirs of this **Heritage**:

The woman on the plane had explained how she knew Jesus as her Savior ever since her baptism at age twelve. “I know what you mean,” I replied. “My earliest memories are of Jesus as my best Friend since I was baptized as a baby.” When she described her mother’s early stages of Alzheimer’s, I asked whether she had shared some of the comforting Bible passages about the power of Baptism. Even when her mind was failing, my grandmother found comfort for her spirit. Remember the KJV of 1 Peter 3:21: **“Baptism doth also now save us.”** Or when Paul was converted, he was told: **“What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”** (Acts 22:16 NIV)

The woman answered, “Some things are hard to understand.” “Yes,” I agreed, “but we don’t give God nearly the credit He deserves for being so good and merciful.” Think of how the Holy Spirit brings us God’s blessings through His chosen tools of Word and sacraments. The Third Person of the Trinity constantly points us to the Father’s love through Jesus Christ our loving Lord and forgiving Savior. He’s been called “the shy member of the Trinity.” Shy, perhaps, but powerful and worthy of divine honor with the Father and the Son. **Praise God for Our Pentecost Heritage.** Look at God’s goodness here!

 **God pours out His Spirit.**

Aside from Peter’s Pentecost sermon and three chapters in the Old Testament, we know very little about the prophet Joel. It must have been a time of prosperity when a dark cloud of locusts filled the sky and devoured their whole food supply, right down to the seeds they needed for next year. But the sickness and death that followed was nothing like the devastation ahead if God’s people did not repent of their sins of idolatry and sexual immorality. Some foreign army would charge into what looked like the Garden of Eden before, and leave behind a desolate waste. “Come to your senses!” was Joel’s cry.

We live in such a similar time it boggles the mind. While so many talk of their “spirituality,” we find ourselves mired in a “me-first!” mentality that leaves no room for God. As natural as dust in the desert is our slavery to our old self. But we’re blinded by our dust clouds and seem to see these sins only so well in others. Paul too was calling us to our senses: **“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”** (Galatians 5:19-21 NIV)

How did Paul reach the point that he could see such sins in himself? How could Peter finally have the courage to preach his Pentecost sermon when only weeks before he was hiding behind locked doors with the rest of the disciples? They had walked and talked with the Master, but somehow missed Jesus’ kindhearted warnings of the cross and promises of resurrection. And ten days before Pentecost at Jesus’ Ascension they were still asking whether He would finally restore an earthly, political kingdom.

It seems to me they were “water logged” like the big tanks that served the homes on my grandfather’s ranch. Someone explained to me that you can’t pressurize water. If you don’t have gravity from a water tower, you need an air pocket in the top of the tank that pressurizes as the water fills. Leak out the air, and you’re water logged with no pressure for the faucets or fire hydrants.

Hearing Jesus preach and teach filled His disciples with the water of life. But they leaked courage and hid behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. There was no pressure to get out with the Gospel and douse the fires of guilt and fear all around them. Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem because they

needed ***“the breath”*** as the LORD calls it in our First Lesson from Ezekiel (37:1-14). Prophecy alone would stand up dry bones all over the valley floor. But until Ezekiel prophesied ***“to the breath,”*** there was no life in them. ***“Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.”*** (Ezekiel 37:9 NIV) When the Comforter came as Jesus promised, the flames of fire on the disciples’ heads burned with fire in their souls. ***“The breath”*** pushed the water of life to nations far and wide.

But can we **Praise God for Our Pentecost Heritage** still today? Church Father Augustine noted what Luther sometimes said that the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit’s gifts was only for apostolic times to confirm God’s Word with signs. (Mark 16:20) So often in our day people try to assert Pentecost miracles in order to prove opinions contrary to the Bible and even claim continuing revelation beyond the Bible. But Isaiah said what Jesus said, and His holy writer to the Hebrews too: ***“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”*** (Isaiah 8:20 NIV) ***“If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”*** (Luke 16:31 NIV) ***“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son....”*** (Hebrews 1:1f NIV)

And yet through the prophet Joel and Jesus’ Apostle Peter the Lord promised: ***“And afterward,”*** or ***“in the last days,”*** as Peter put it. That’s a technical term for the End Times, the New Testament era when God promised, ***“I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”*** (Joel 2:28f NIV) **Praise God – He did it! Praise God – He does it! Praise God for our Pentecost Heritage. God pours out His Spirit.** And we see...

Our sons and daughters prophesy.

After a Bible class someone asked, “If God no longer gives the gift of languages, how come you know Hebrew and Greek, but the rest of us don’t?” Was I not giving God the Holy Spirit the credit He deserves? I started watching to see **Our sons and daughters prophesy.** Once I realized that ***“prophesy”*** in the Bible means to *preach, proclaim, or tell out loud*, I noticed many miracles of the Holy Spirit.

One mother told how her little son sat his younger sisters down after church and taught them the Children’s Lesson at home. One daughter of New Life would take her Sunday School folder to the neighbor’s tree house to share the lesson with her friends. Another daughter of our congregation spent a year as an exchange student in Argentina, and even taught Spanish grammar to some of her Argentine friends. During a college semester abroad she emailed me from Brazil about teaching Bible stories to the poor children. After she got back I asked, “How long did it take you to learn Portuguese like that?” “Oh, Pastor,” she said sadly. “It was so slow. Before I could teach the Bible stories in Portuguese, it took me a whole month.” And when my son overheard my end of a phone conversation with a woman who accused me of “proof-passaging” about Baptism, my Joel asked, “Dad, where are we supposed to get our doctrine if not from the Bible passages?” Maybe none of these examples look as spectacular as Pentecost. But wouldn’t you agree? We should give God the glory that still today **Our sons and daughters prophesy.**

Maybe you need one of your daughters to shout through the house midsummer: ***“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace!”*** ***“Like streams in the desert”*** (Isaiah 35:6), it shook me out of my sadness that day. Christ died for all my sins of selfishness, yours too. For all those dark thoughts about others that put us down so hard and long – Christ died and rose again. You can’t find a better way to **Praise God for Our Pentecost Heritage** than to take His Word to heart and thank God your sins are fully, freely, forever forgiven. ***“The breath”*** in your heart-tank will pressurize the Gospel waters to thirsty souls all around, beginning with your own. And ***“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*** (Galatians 5:22f NIV) If you’re not there yet, don’t despair. Say a prayer for ***“streams in the desert,”*** and let God deliver as He always does with Word and sacrament. Think on your Baptism, what awesome comfort that God put His Name on you and washed your sins away. Let His mercy cover everyone around you, and you won’t have time to be blue. You’ll be too busy thanking and praising God **for Our Pentecost Heritage** today. Amen.

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