**Street Preaching and the First Divine Service**

Based on [Acts 2:1-21](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Ac2.1-21)

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The Day of Pentecost

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Sometime after Noah’s flood, the people of the earth gathered together in order to build a tower to the heavens. They did so “**to make a name for themselves**.” This is rebellion against God’s Name, it is taking his name in vain…the Lord whose Name is above all things. People wanted to have their own glory without God. So God sent a curse and confused their languages, so that they could not communicate and cooperate in their sin. This is why there are different languages, tribes and peoples throughout the world today; because God scattered the people at Babel by dividing their tongues.

Today we observe Pentecost, the day God brings his people together from every nation to one place and un-divides their tongues**. He once confused their languages so they couldn’t cooperate in sin, but now the Holy Spirit helps them understand together the good news of Jesus Christ, so that they could have a name for themselves that God would give them in Baptism**. And three thousand were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

It’s hard to say exactly how the first Christian Pentecost unfolded, but we know enough. We know that after Jesus ascended there were 120 disciples of Jesus, men and women, who gathered together to choose an apostle to replace Judas. Then, when Pentecost had arrived, the epistle says, “**they were all together in one place**.” Then “a sound like a mighty rushing wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Sprit gave them utterance.”

Apparently 120 disciples, men and women, were preaching the good news of Jesus Christ to people who didn’t speak the language. But the Holy Spirit that day gave them, not only the courage to speak, but also the ability to communicate with people who normally wouldn’t understand them. “And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “**Are not all of these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?”** This is on account of the Helper, the Holy Spirit, who in these last days is poured out upon all flesh, and both sons and daughters shall prophesy, and young men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams; even on male and female servants in those days shall prophesy…as the prophet Joel had said would happen.

There is much confusion over what is happening here which has caused no small amount of false teaching to later arise in the church. The bible teaches that “no one should publically teach in the church or administer the sacraments without a rightly ordered call” (Augsburg Confession Article XIV). Scripture also teaches that women should not be pastors (1 Cor 14:34, 1 Tim 2:12). But some have said that all 120 disciples, men and women are preaching here, and it’s not just men, not just pastors.

This is why it’s important to read carefully the bible, and really think through what’s going on. While the 120 are preaching, they are not acting as ministers, nor are they publically conducting a church service. Their evangelism is dispersed throughout the crowd, disorderly and private. **It is comparable to church members greeting new visitors on Sunday morning. The Divine Service hasn’t started yet. It’s not that 120 unordained men and women are preaching the gospel to thousands of people as one captive audience.** This is not “preaching in the church.” This is street evangelism miraculously initiated and carried out in with and through the Holy Spirit who is poured out on all flesh, and yes all Christians have been given the Holy Spirit to speak the gospel to their neighbors.

Lots of evangelism is happening at first. But the church service begins when Peter, scripture points out, standing with the eleven other apostles—all called and ordained men--lifted up his voice and addressed them: “**Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words**.” As a called minister, Peter is saying: “Men of Judea I am going to publically teach you now, because that’s what Christ has rightly called me to do”. Jesus said personally to Peter in John 21, “Pastor my sheep.” He said to Peter, “I give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. He said to the ten apostles gathered Easter Evening receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive any their sins they are forgiven. Here Peter--and on Pentecost, the original 12 men chosen as apostles--for the first time in history carry out the office of the holy ministry. They had been given the office to speak to the church in the stead and by the command of Jesus Christ, and administer to them the Sacraments. And that’s what Peter does.

Now, this Epistle reading ends in the middle of Peter’s sermon, after he teaches them that this speaking in tongues was the fulfillment of prophecy. But the sermon and Church service that day didn’t end there. **Peter continued to publically teach them the gospel. He preached to all of them that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ whom his own people crucified; and that death could not hold him, and that God raised him from the dead, and now he is ascended to the right hand of God.** Death, resurrection, ascension, that’s the Gospel, and he teaches it publically to God’s people assembled.

And they were convicted in the heart and asked “what shall we do?” “**Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins**” Peter teaches. And they do, and were given the sacrament of initiation into Christ. “**So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls**.” If you’re keeping count, the Christian Church the day after Pentecost consisted of 3,120 souls, 120 disciples add 3000. Word and sacrament ministry happened for the first time that day by the activity of the Holy Spirit. Sola Deo Gloria.

And it says how the church carried on after. “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Each one of you who have been baptized have had the Holy Spirit poured out upon you. You have not received tongues of fire, but you have received the gospel of Jesus Christ and the right to speak to others about him. And you have called me to preach these things to you publically in the church and to administer the Sacraments to you; and in your Calling, the Holy Spirit Helps me to do so.

Pentecost is about the sending of the Holy Spirit. And that day the Holy Spirit arrived as planned and did two things: First, he gathered the church through the evangelism of all his disciples; and then he initiated the first ministry of pastors to the church. In these ways, the Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify the true church on earth, and keep it with Christ in the one true faith.

In this same Spirit we are gather here weekly. We hear the gospel. We receive forgiveness, life, salvation from Christ humself. And despite our sin and failures, Jesus renews within us a willing spirit to speak the mighty works of God to all people until Christ returns from heaven to make all things new.