

“Pentecost and People Go Together”
John 14:15-17, 25-26; 16:5-15; Acts 2:1-4
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Today is Pentecost on the Christian calendar. While we tend to highlight other seasons more, like Advent and Easter, Pentecost is no less important.

Pentecost comes from a Greek word that means “fiftieth.” On the fiftieth day after the children of Israel left Egypt, they arrived at Mount Sinai. It was on Mount Sinai that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. To commemorate this event each year, the Jews observed the Festival of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Over two hundred fifty thousand people would travel to the holy city annually to celebrate.

The year that Jesus was crucified and resurrected, Pentecost took on new meaning for Christians. While many disciples were gathered in a room somewhere in Jerusalem during the festival, the Spirit of God descended upon them and filled their hearts and lives. Immediately, they began speaking in languages they had never spoken and sharing the Gospel with people from all parts of the world who had come to celebrate Pentecost. Peter preached a sermon to the crowd that assembled and three thousand were saved and added to their numbers.

Ever since that day, Pentecost has symbolized the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of believers empowering them to do His work. This morning, I want to share with you what Pentecost teaches me about God.

First of all, Pentecost reveals the confidence God has in people. Pentecost and people go together. The reason the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples that day was to empower them to continue the work of the Risen Lord. Jesus’ earthly ministry was complete but his work was just beginning.

Who would reach out to the broken, lonely and rejected now that he was gone? Who would heal the sick and comfort the grieving? Who would teach people the Word and ways of God? Who would model what it means to love God and neighbor? Who would speak up for the voiceless and champion the rights of the powerless? Who would expose injustice and demand accountability? Who would proclaim the message of grace, peace and hope to a restless world?

Do you see how much confidence God had in those early disciples and has in us? He has entrusted to us the most important work in this world. He is counting on us to be His spokesmen in a world that desperately needs to hear the Gospel. He is depending upon us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and model genuine Christianity.

What an honor. What a compliment. What a challenge. I hope His confidence humbles and inspires you. More than that, I hope it motivates you to do His work.

Secondly, Pentecost reveals the love God has for people. The most common word for Holy Spirit in Scripture is Parakletos or helper. It means “one called along side to help another in their time of need.”

Recently, Jackie and I walked around Stone Mountain. We stopped at Memorial Hall for a few moments. As we were leaving, I noticed a family preparing to leave, also. The father took his daughter’s hand and the mother took her son’s hand. I overheard this little girl say to her father, “Daddy, if you get scared, you can hold momma’s hand.” He looked at her and asked what she said, so she replied, “If you get scared or lost, you can

take momma's hand." He smiled and then I watched as all four held hands and walked outside.

Little girls know that it is nice to have someone beside you when you are traveling down unfamiliar pathways. Adults know this, too. This is why God sent His Spirit to live in our hearts and walk with us every step of our journey here and hereafter.

There is no doubt the Spirit came at Pentecost to empower the disciples to do the work of the Lord. However, the Spirit of God came also to encourage, comfort, guide, instruct, protect and defend. God's Spirit came to give people a meaningful life and hopeful tomorrow. That's His purpose today, too.

I believe one reason I like the song "In the Garden" is because it reminds me of the love of God and companionship of His Spirit.

I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.
And He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share, as we tarry there, none other has ever known.

Do you have this kind of relationship with God? Does His Spirit live in your heart encouraging, comforting, guiding, instructing, protecting and empowering you? Can you sense His confidence in you and love for you? I hope you can and I also hope you will open your heart and life to Him. What a difference He will make in you and our world through you.