



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 30

COME, HOLY SPIRIT: THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST

SUMMARY OF TODAY'S STORY

On the Jewish day of Pentecost, followers of Jesus, who were from Galilee, were gathered together.

Suddenly, a noise came from the sky like a strong wind blowing, and tongues of fire touched each person there. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages so that people from every country in the world could understand them, each in their own native language.

All of those present were amazed that they could, in the hearers' languages, hear the Galileans talk about what God has done.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Holy Spirit
- Pentecost
- Understanding

WHERE YOU'LL FIND TODAY'S STORY

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

Acts 2:1-11

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following Sundays:

Year A: Day of Pentecost

Year B: Day of Pentecost

Year C: Day of Pentecost

WEAVING OUR STORY WITH THE BIBLICAL STORY



We finally can hear God speaking to us. This event, the coming of the Holy Spirit, is the reversal of what happened at the Tower of Babel. There our languages became confused so that we could no longer understand one another, not only spoiling our attempt to reach heaven by our own efforts and pride, but also alienating us from each other and God.

Now, God has sent God's Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, to bring us back to God. As the apostles gather to celebrate the Jewish feast of Pentecost, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here at this Jewish celebration, God's promise to Israel made at Mount Sinai—as recorded in the story of the people receiving the Ten Commandments—is fulfilled. With the coming of the Holy Spirit as told in Acts, all peoples of the earth are offered the new covenant and the gift of God's grace.

At Sinai, God appeared in the form of fire and smoke. Here at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit appears in the shape of tongues of fire.

This event is celebrated in the church as the birth of the Church, the beginning of the preaching that will carry the Good News of God in Christ to all nations of the earth. This preaching will untangle the confusion of languages that began at the Tower of Babel. God has now reversed that alienation.

Note: As the teacher, it would be a good idea for you to read the rest of chapter 2 in Acts to find out what the followers of Jesus were saying in these “foreign tongues.” After the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter—the bumbling fisherman—stood up and witnessed for Jesus just as Jesus had commanded the disciples to do. Peter's preaching was amazing and “many of them believed his message and were baptized, and about three thousand people were added to the group that day”

(Acts 2:41).



THE EPISCOPAL THREAD

The Day of Pentecost is one of the Principal Feasts in the Church and always takes place on a Sunday. Often in the Episcopal Church, this day is

celebrated with a church service filled with symbols of the Holy Spirit. Adorned with red balloons, red roses, flying kites and banners, even real doves, the church takes on a festive and joyful air. The lesson from Acts is sometimes read in a foreign language, bringing to life the experience of the disciples and people in the passage.

As a Trinitarian church, the Episcopal Church sees the Holy Spirit daily in the presence of God that sustains us. The Holy Spirit is invoked at baptism: “You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism...” (*BCP*, p. 308); at confirmation: “...and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more...” (*BCP*, p. 418); in the consecration of bread and wine at Eucharist and of oil for chrism and for anointing; in the anointing for healing; and in the ordination of a deacon, priest and bishop.



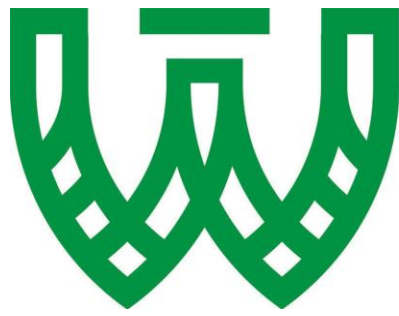
WEAVING GOD’S BELOVED COMMUNITY

Pentecost is considered the Birthday of the Church because it is when the Disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned to go out into the world to spread the good news of God’s Beloved Community.

With the gift by God of the Holy Spirit, we are given the ability to dream big dreams and to imagine bold visions of what we can do to lift up our communities, to lift up the poor and the needy, and to bring the hope and promise of God’s Beloved Community to the world.

The Holy Spirit is here to empower us in bringing the dream God’s Beloved Community to fruition. This is not the time to be timid, or to hold back, or to hoard what we have so much of, when we can do so much to help those who have so little. With the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are now within our hearts, we can be bold in building that Beloved Community that would welcome and embrace the dignity of all people.

- ▮ What bold changes do you hope for to bring about Beloved Community?**
- ▮ What small act of kindness can you do this week to share God’s love?**



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ACTS 2:1-11

Wild wind, tongues of fire and wild talk

Today is the day of Pentecost, a Jewish holiday. The disciples are in a house in Jerusalem, sitting all together and talking. Maybe they are celebrating the holiday. They are probably telling stories about Jesus, how they all have seen Jesus and what Jesus has been telling them for these last 40 days since he rose from the dead.

All of a sudden, a sound comes down from heaven – a very loud sound. It sounds like a fierce strong wind, what we call a hurricane or a tornado. The sound of the wind fills up the whole house.

Then the disciples see a strange sight. Are those tongues in the air? or fire?

No! *It's the Holy Spirit!*

A tongue comes to rest on Peter, then John, then James, then all the rest of the disciples. They feel the Holy Spirit fill them up.

Nathaniel says something to Peter. Peter talks to Thomas. Thomas speaks to Matthew. They all talk at the same time. But what's this we hear? They are all speaking different

languages! Before, they only knew the language of their homeland Galilee. Now they can talk and understand the talk of people from all over! They are so excited to hear each other that they talk and talk and talk.

People outside the house hear the sound of the wind from heaven. Then they hear the sound of lots of voices speaking lots of different languages. What is happening, they wonder? What's going on? And who is inside that house, people from all over, all together? Usually people from Judea only talk to people from Judea, and people from Egypt only talk to people from Egypt, and people from Libya only talk to people from Libya. We can't understand the talk of people who don't come from where we come from.

A crowd gathers outside the house, and the people peek inside. They see the disciples talking. And each person outside hears the disciples speaking in their own language. What an amazing thing!

Peter tells what happened to them

One of them says, "But all of them are from Galilee! How can we hear them talk in our language and not theirs? How is it that you, from Egypt, hear them speaking Egyptian while I, from Libya, hear them speaking Libyan? How can that happen? And what does it mean?"

Some in the crowd don't believe what they hear. It must not be real! One of them says, "Oh, they just had too much wine to drink!"

But Peter hears the crowd talking and whispering. He goes outside and shouts to them, “All you in Jerusalem, listen! We are not drunk! Remember that God promised, a long time ago, to pour his Spirit on his people and then God will work wonders with us? God has just worked his greatest wonder by raising up Jesus from the dead. He was dead and now he is alive, and he came to bring us to God! And we are sent from God to give you that good news!”

Jesus has risen from the dead! The Holy Spirit has come to us from God!
Now God lives among us, now and forever!