

**One Word describes Pentecost-Change**

**June 4, 2017**

**Acts 2:1-21**

**Day of Pentecost**

Grace and Peace to you from God Our Father, from God’s Son, Jesus Christ, and from God’s Holy Spirit, the Change Maker, amen.

PENTECOST CAN BE SUMMED UP IN A WORD… What single word would you give to this day in Church History?

I think it’s generally true people are always looking to improve their lives for the better. That’s why there are so many commercials for diet and exercise products – lots of people out there trying to change their appearance for the better. I saw recently how you can have fat taken from your rear end injected into your cheeks and lips to give you a more fuller appearance… People are always looking to improve for the better. Isn’t that why people go to school? Isn’t that why people go to conferences and seminars? Isn’t that why people go to counselors, psychologists, and Spiritual Directors? People want to be changed for the better. If you could improve one thing about yourself, what would it be? Is it the way you look? Something to do with your health? Something to do with your level of expertise on a certain subject? If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

In case you haven’t guessed it by now, my one word description of Pentecost is “Change.” God is interested in change. He changed the disciples and he’s interested in changing you. I mean, think about it, when Jesus met Simon the fisherman the very first thing Jesus said to Simon was I’m changing your name to Peter. Jesus meets this guy and changes his name, his identity within the first 5 minutes of meeting the guy! Today is Pentecost Sunday, and on this day in Church History God changed many people’s lives. God is in the change business and God is also interested in changing you. Yes, believe it or not, there are certain things about you God wants to change. I know, it’s hard to believe, isn’t it? But it’s true…

Two major changes took place on Pentecost. Change number one was what happened to the disciples. We all know the disciples believed in Jesus as their Savior, but they were still very confused about all kinds of different things. They still didn’t fully understand Jesus’ mission, why he had come to earth. They were still wondering if Jesus would be an earthly king. They were confused, and as a result, they were timid. They weren’t confident about sharing the Gospel with others perhaps because they were still stuck with their own view of what a savior was and what type of kingdom Jesus was the king over. How could they be bold, if they didn’t fully get Jesus?

But then Pentecost came. The disciples were together, when the sound of a blowing wind came down from heaven. What seemed to be tongues of fire settled on their heads. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. As they began to speak all the gathered people from every part of the known world began to hear and understand them in their own native languages. The gathered crowd were people from all over the world, and they listened as the disciples preached the Gospel. The Apostle Peter stood up and addressed the crowd – he gave what might be called by today’s standards a bland and mediocre sermon, but one the Holy Spirit inspired him to preach. You can read it for yourselves. It comes right after where our first reading for today stopped. We don’t even read it, it’s that bland… But here’s the thing. On the day of Pentecost a boring, bland, mediocre sermon caused the conversion of 3000 people in one day. That’s the power of God’s Holy Spirit!

Changes took place on Pentecost! No longer were the disciples confused. Now they understood the plan of salvation completely. When the people asked Peter what should we do, he didn’t hesitate or equivocate, he spoke it to them plainly. “Repent of your sin and be Baptized!” No longer were they timid. Now, they were confident, speaking publicly. Look at Peter – two months earlier he was so afraid he denied Jesus three times. Now he was speaking to the crowd with confidence and understanding he had never had before.

There was another change that took place on Pentecost, and you could argue this change was even more spectacular than what happened to the disciples. After Peter preached his sermon on Pentecost, 3000 people came to faith and were baptized. We don’t know much about these people. We do know Jerusalem was packed with people, because of the Festival of Pentecost. Back then, Pentecost was an agricultural festival – God’s Word told the Jews to gather in Jerusalem 50 days after Passover to celebrate the harvest. Jews from all over the Roman empire came. 3000 of them who were not Christians, who did not believe in Jesus Christ, were changed that day. Their whole way of looking at God, at themselves, at the world, at eternal life – everything had changed. The Holy Spirit was the one who converted those 3000 people that day, not Peter with his beautifully eloquent flowingly BORING sermon. Now these people had gone from death to life! Now they knew they were at peace with God! Now they knew Jesus was their Savior and the Lord of their lives! The Holy Spirit rocked their world!

Pentecost can be summed up in one word, and I believe that word is change. We see the change that took place in the disciples, and the change that took place in those 3000 people. Our world today is sadly still in need of change. We need the Holy Spirit to come to us, and change us. We need to be freed from our confusion and fears. We need to be both confronted and comforted. Confronted with our sin and comforted by God’s Grace.

I wonder if we really understand our deep-seated need to be changed or do we like ourselves just as we are? “I’m alright the way I am,” we say to ourselves. “What do I need to change about myself?” The answer is, a lot. We still have moments when we think we’re in charge and we don’t really have to humble ourselves to Lord Jesus or any other lord for that matter… We still have moments when we completely misunderstand God’s call and claim on our lives. We still have moments when we fail to share our faith because we’re too timid. It’s true we are Christians, our salvation is assured, but we still need to change.

How does a person change their soul? You can’t do it by trying to be a better person. That’s like saying that there is something wrong with my car, but I’ll try to change that by being a better driver. You can’t read a self-help book or follow the latest guru. You need someone to work on your engine, your soul. But the thing is, your soul is too complicated for you to fix yourself. You need someone to fix it for you. And that someone is the Holy Sprit.

Holy Spirit comes to you through the quiet, humble preaching of the Word. On the surface, it doesn’t look like anything spectacular. But on the inside of you, all kinds of changes are taking place. And when we combine the Word with water, we get baptism. What happens at a baptism? Once again, on the surface, it doesn’t look like anything spectacular. But we know from what God tells us in his Word in baptism, the Holy Spirit changes a person, causes a person, even a little person, to believe in Christ and brings them from death to life.

What happens when we combine God’s Word with bread and wine, as Jesus did on the night he was betrayed? Once again, it doesn’t look like anything spectacular, but it is. Because as we partake of Christ’s actual body and blood in this Sacrament, the Holy Spirit changes you. He strengthens your faith, he increases your love for Christ and your love for one another, he forgives your sin and once again brings you from death to life.

Do you want to be more confident in your faith? Do you want to be more at peace with God and yourself? Do you want to understand the Bible better? Do you want to be able to share your faith more naturally, more confidently? Do you want to be able to more effectively use the words “My Church” or “Our Church” when talking to your friends and acquaintances? Do you want to be able to live the way God tells you to live? Do you want to change your soul for the better? I’m sorry to inform you, you can’t do any of that stuff, but thanks be to God, The Holy Spirit does. He did that in a miraculous, unusual way on that first Pentecost. Today, he does it as you spend time hearing the Word, as you see a baptism, as you take the Lord’s Supper – that’s how the Holy Spirit changes people, changes you, turning you more and more into the Christian that God has made you to be.

If you could sum up Pentecost in just one word, would that one word would be change? I pray it’s so for you today. Come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of your people. May the Holy Spirit continue to work in you, to change you, to fan into flame the fire that is in each one of you. Amen.