

Sunday Lesson – May 23, 2021

GOSPEL: Acts 2: 1 - 4; Galatians 4: 1 – 7; 5: 16 - 26

Pentecost; Fruits of the Spirit

Background

“At Pentecost the gift of the Spirit of Jesus Christ leads to the formation of a new humanity, which is being conformed to His humanity. The Law was a means of death; the Spirit brings new life. This Law/Spirit distinction underlies much of Paul’s theology. The OT Law was unable to succeed in its goal, because human beings were still in Adam. Only as Christ establishes a new humanity by His Spirit can the goals be completed.” *(Excerpts from alastairadversaria.com/2005/10/17/pentecost-part-1/)*

Insight

“All of the New Testament reports of the Spirit’s arrival have two things in common: (1) the identity of the Spirit is specific and specifically tied to the identity of the risen Christ, and (2) the Spirit’s work is to draw human beings into a relationship with God like that which the Father and Son share.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/pentecost/commentary-on-acts-21-4-galatians-41-7-516-26)*

Gospel Reading

2:1-4 “When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.”

4:1-7 “Let me show you the implications of this. As long as the heir is a minor, he has no advantage over the slave. Though legally he owns the entire inheritance, he is subject to tutors and administrators until whatever date the father has set for emancipation. That is the way it is with us: When we were



minors, we were just like slaves ordered around by simple instructions (the tutors and administrators of this world), with no say in the conduct of our own lives. But when the time arrived that was set by God the Father, God sent his Son, born among us of a woman, born under the conditions of the law so that he might redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the law. Thus we have been set free to experience our rightful heritage. You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, “Papa! Father!” Doesn’t that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you are a child, you’re also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance.”

5:16-26 “My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God’s Spirit. Then you won’t feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are contrary to each other, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. Why don’t you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence? It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on. This isn’t the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God’s kingdom. But what happens when we

live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified. Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.” The Message

What It Could Mean?

“Too often we focus—and even obsess—about the signs of Pentecost, and we somehow forget that the spiritual gifts and signs exist to point us beyond themselves to the Son with whom we are united by the Spirit. We are quick to ask an assortment of questions like: Is the gift of tongues a necessary evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Why do some people and churches experience tongues regularly while others rarely do?

Instead of these things, Paul, like Peter, sets the reception and role of the Spirit within a biblical-theological framework. In Galatians 4:1-7, he situates the Spirit within the motif of the movement of believers from slavery under the stewardship of the Law to adoption as sons and daughters in the Son, crying out “Abba Father!” through the Spirit (Galatians 4:2, 6). Set within the larger Galatian theme of the Law awaiting its covenantal completion in Christ, the role of the Spirit in 4:1-7

becomes even clearer. Paul describes the function of Law as that of a guardian and manager to watch over those who are not “sons” but mere “children” and “slaves” (Galatians 4:1, 7).

Paul’s exhortation here is not to be missed: “if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). We are, indeed, children of the living God. But transformation into the family resemblance of God and the Son by the Spirit doesn’t occur by accident. Holiness doesn’t happen on spiritual autopilot. No, we are sanctified by actively following in the footsteps of the faithful obedience of the Son. We do this not to earn our salvation, but to demonstrate it through our works, and to work out our salvation with fear and trembling by the power that God provides through the Holy Spirit.” (*Excerpts from workingpreacher.org by John Frederick*)

Readings for Further Study

- [Romans 8:9/1 Corinthians 12:13/Ephesians 1:13-14](#)
Everyone receives the Holy Spirit the moment they believe in Jesus Christ
- [2 Corinthians 5:17/Philippians 4:13](#) *The Holy Spirit produces His fruit in us and His power to conquer sin*

Thought for the Day

“Love is the overflow of joy in God! It is not duty for duty's sake, or right for right's sake. It is not a resolute abandoning of one's own good with a view solely to the good of the other person. It is first a deeply satisfying experience of the fullness of God's grace, and then a doubly satisfying experience of sharing that grace with another person.” ~ *John Piper*

A Prayer

Abba, Father, You have adopted us as heirs of your kingdom and we have inherited the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit. Through the fire of the Spirit make us generous givers of all that you have bestowed upon us, for the sake of the one whose fire brings light and life to all the world, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**