

## Message for June 7, 2020

Last Sunday was Pentecost and somehow I missed it. No excuses. But as the old saying goes, "better late than never." So let me share a few words about one of the greatest events in church history. I love Pentecost!

There are several aspects to it that don't receive the attention they deserve. We generally focus on the supernatural effect this event had on the disciples in the upper room, such as the tongues of fire and the speaking in tongues, or other languages. But there's more to it than that.

Pentecost demonstrates the faithfulness of God in relation to the fulfillment of a promise. Jesus told His disciples that they would not be left alone after His departure. He would send a Helper to provide for them the same kind of wisdom and guidance that Jesus Himself did during His three years on earth. This Helper, as the indwelling Holy Spirit, had already been given prior to Jesus' ascension (see John 14:16-17 & John 20:19-22). He is ever-present since He resides not as someone nearby, but rather *within* us! How wondrous is that? Are you feeling lonely during this time of being shut in and social distancing? Look within to the God who never leaves you. Allow yourself to feel His presence and the peace He wants you to enjoy, even in times of distress. Spend some quiet time each day casting all your cares on Him. Remember, He cares for you! But now at Pentecost the Helper would come *upon* the disciples in order to provide the power to carry out their ministry. God is faithful to us as well in that this same power is available to you and me. Do you believe it? It's a promise and God *always* keeps His promises!

Another aspect of Pentecost demonstrates the provision of God for His people. Scripture speaks of the various, diverse spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit brought with Him (see I Corinthians 12:4-11). Each believer has at least one and they all serve a distinct purpose to help edify, or build up, the body of Christ. Without them we would be weak and misguided, wandering aimlessly along according to our own understanding. But when we rely on the Holy Spirit to exercise these gifts through us we become bold in our faith, powerful, and wise. Nothing is impossible to those who are Spirit-led. This is what God wants to bring all of His children into, a life of glorious victory and fulfillment. It is your birthright when you become born again. Do you know what your gifts are and how to use them? Ask the Holy Spirit to

reveal them to you and to help you discern His voice as He prompts you to use them. All of us will benefit and grow spiritually when you do. And it brings glory to God as well. And don't forget to thank Him for His good gifts.

We say that God is our Creator, and so He is. He created us and the universe we live in. But acts of creation didn't end on the seventh day when He rested. God never stops being creative in diverse ways, and Pentecost is a good example of that. Never before had anything like that happened. It was a totally new and wondrous thing that reflects His very nature. So we shouldn't be surprised that in this modern age He continues to be creative and do new things as well, both with us and through us. As a matter of fact, what we really should be doing is maintaining an attitude of expectation that at any given moment God might burst into our little corner of the world to amaze us with something new and inspiring. After all, why not? Don't we serve an awesome and amazing God who loves us beyond our comprehension and showers us with blessings of grace?

Pentecost also reveals the sovereignty and power of God to change lives. The disciples had been terribly fearful, locking themselves in the upper room, thinking it was just a matter of time before they would suffer the same fate as Jesus (see Luke 24:46-49). But all that changed once the Holy Spirit came upon them. Look at how bold they became! All fear was gone! Do you want to lead that kind of life, fearless and with abandon, experiencing the miracles of God? Pentecost wasn't only for the disciples. That same promise is ours too. If we truly desire it, God will fulfill it for us as well. Just think of what God could do through us if we were totally open to the moving of the Holy Spirit among us. It is one of the desires of my heart to see that happen at Second Baptist and for God's glory to be on full display here. Please pray with me for our congregation to experience such a modern day Pentecost.

Love and Grace to all,  
Pastor Joe

*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. -- Ephesians 3:20-21*

## THE WINE OF THE SPIRIT

“No one puts new wine into old wineskins,” said Jesus (Luke 5:37). Drawing on this statement, a preacher in sixth-century Africa proclaimed in a Pentecost homily:

“It was with good reason, then, that some people, when they heard the apostles speaking in every tongue, said, ‘They are filled with the new wine.’ For they had become fresh wineskins, they had been renewed by the grace of holiness, so that when they were filled with the new wine, that is, with the Holy Spirit, they spoke with fervor in every tongue. ...

“Celebrate, then, this day as members of the one body of Christ. Your celebration will not be in vain if you are what you celebrate, if you hold fast to the church which the Lord filled with his Holy Spirit.”

Fifteen centuries later, may that call still resonate with us. May we be so renewed by God’s grace as to be worthy vessels of the new wine of the Holy Spirit — and to share it with the world.

## CLOSER AND CLOSER

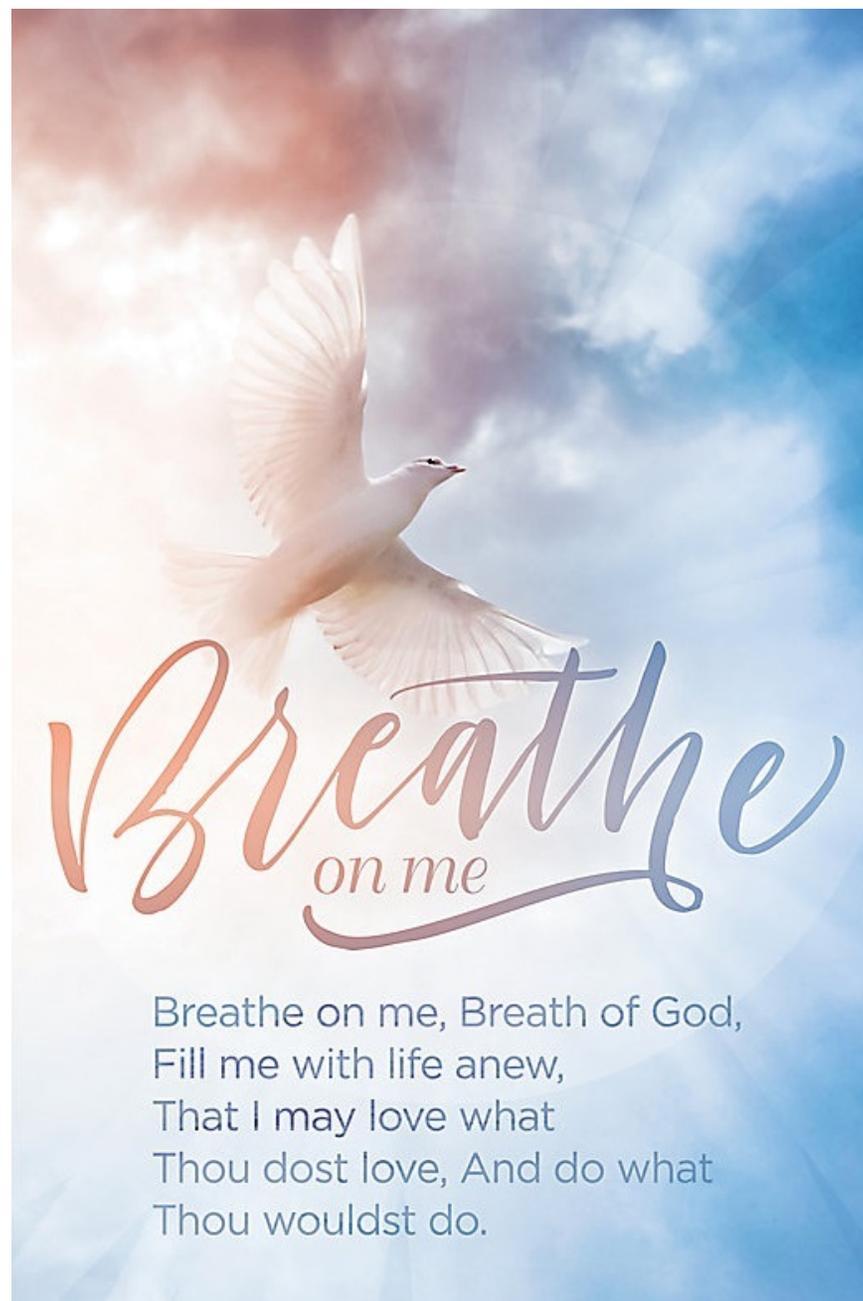
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0000 The progression — Father, Son, Spirit — represents a profound advance in intimacy. At Sinai, the people shrank from God and begged Moses to approach him on their behalf. But in Jesus’ day, people could hold a conversation with the Son of God; they could touch him and even hurt him. And after Pentecost the same flawed disciples who had fled from Jesus’ trial became carriers of the Living God. In an act of delegation beyond fathom, Jesus turned over the kingdom of God to the likes of his disciples — and to us.

—Philip Yancey, *Disappointment With God*

After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.

—Nelson Mandela



“The Little Church Tat Could”  
Believing Is Seeing”