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May 20, 2018
ILC, Wichita, KS
Pentecost Sunday, "Earth, Wind, and Fire"
Acts 2: 1-21

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text which serves as the basis for my message today is taken from the Epistle lesson. I would like to reread the first four verses of the Epistle. From Acts, chapter 2, verse 1

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested^[a] on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ.

This Sunday we celebrate the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit being given to the disciples and to the church. The Holy Ghost can be a confusing subject. Just how confusing it can be is illustrated by a story I heard ... about a little girl and the Holy Ghost.... (Get ready to smile out loud!...)

A church going family took a little girl... who was visiting with them... to church one Sunday. This girl had never been to church in her life but seemed to enjoy the experience. When they returned home and were eating lunch, they asked the girl what she thought about the experience.

She said she liked it, but she was confused about one thing.

She asked why the Whole West Coast wasn't included. Nobody in the family knew what she was talking about. So, she explained, "The man in the front kept talking about the Father, Son and Whole-East-Coast." cute story... get it... "Whole East Ghost" ... "Holy Ghost"

God didn't leave out the West Coast, God included everyone in the celebration of this day.

Today we've gathered to worship and to celebrate Pentecost.

Pentecost Sunday is the 5th most important Sunday or Festival of the Christian year.

-- Number 1 -- On Christmas we celebrated the birth of Christ and the entrance of the divine into the midst of humanity.

-- Number 3 -- On Epiphany we celebrate – the revelation or gift to the Gentiles, non-Jews, that they have a Messiah.

-- Number 3 -- On Easter we celebrate the sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of the world and His resurrection from the dead which promises us eternal life.

-- Number 4 -- On Ascension which we celebrated just 10 days ago... we celebrate the physical Ascension of Christ into heaven... to go and prepare a place for us in eternity.

-- And now... number 5 -- on Pentecost we celebrate the birthday of the church. It's the day the Spirit of God Father, the Holy Spirit of Christ, entered into the life of our Lord's Disciples.

From Pentecost on, the very Spirit of God is with and empowering all who believe, all who have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior of their lives.

Pentecost is the day the Earth was filled with the Wind and Fire of heaven, And so... I have entitled my sermon... Pentecost Sunday... ..

Earth, Wind, and Fire.

I. First lets look at earth...

A. Obviously the EARTH in the EARTH, WIND AND FIRE which I'm talking about is US. Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth."

If you remember, salt was a precious commodity and had three purposes in ancient times. It was apreservative, arestorative and aspice.

1) -- As a **preservative**,salt was used to preserve meat and fish. It's still used that way today. Most of the cured pork we eat today has salt in it as a curative and preservative. It may not be as much as in times past but it is still used to help preserve the meat for a later use.

2) -- As a **restorative**,salt was used for medicinal purposes. It was used to clean out a wound which had become infected. We still use it that way today occasionally. My doctor still prescribes gargling with salt water when I have a sore throat.

3) -- And then salt was simply a**spice to** enhance or draw out the flavor of food. Can you imagine popcorn without salt?

We're called to be the salt of the earth.

B. We're are also called to be the Preservative, Restorative and spice in the world.

1) -- We're called to Preserve our relationship with God.

2) -- We're called to be restorative... we are called to restore others... to invite others to church on Sunday.

3) -- And we're called to be the spice of the world, those folks who add extra flavor and enhance the flavor of life in the world. We are called to keep the people of the world living moral lives... living value filled lives.

Pentecost calls us to be the... earth... we are filled with God's Holy Spirit... to carry out God's mission to our world.

II. The second point is that on Pentecost the gift of ... wind... was given....

A. How do you explain the Holy Spirit? We say that the

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE BREATH AND WIND OF GOD.

In the baptismal liturgy... and repeated in the Confirmation liturgy... this prayer is spoken

The Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given you the new birth of water and...(pause) ... of the Spirit.

In a prior used Lutheran baptismal liturgy... the pastor used to breath onto the child and say: "Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

We are granted a special blessing of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized and when we are confirmed.

We might not understand all the dimensions of the Holy Spirit... but He is in our hearts and he is in our lives.

Scripture says that we are created in the image of God and that God breathed life into us. We know about the fall and how we turned our back on God and sought to do things our own way. But that didn't take away our heritage or the breath of God.

After Pentecost... with the gift of our Baptisms and our Confirmations... . Not only are we filled with the breath of God, but we are filled with God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides us, lifts us beyond the weight of the earthly things and makes life joyous.

That's not the best description but it helps me understand that....

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE BREATH AND WIND OF GOD.

III. And finally the third gift given on Pentecost is the gift of... Fire

A. Scripture also describes the Spirit as fire.

There are a number of other places in which Scripture describes God's Spirit as fire.

-- First remember how... God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush...(pause) ... that wasn't consumed.

-- And then the Bible describes God leading the Israelites through the wilderness as a "cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night."

Symbolically, the Holy Spirit set our hearts on.... fire.

In the Epistle lesson for today we read in Acts ... that God gathered all the disciples together in one place 50 days after the resurrection, 10 day after Jesus' Ascension. They were still uncertain, still maybe even a little frightened even though their numbers had grown.

But God took all of those **fears**. All of that **anxiety** and all of that **uncertainty** and put them in His heart so they wouldn't have to carry it any longer.

And then God opened their hearts and poured out his Holy Spirit upon them and the Spirit rested on them like tongues of **fire**. And their hearts were "strangely warmed." That warmth, gave them the power they needed to carry out the mission of God. The heartwarming of the Holy Spirit is ten times more powerful than the fear of God's wrath. And that's one of the reasons God set their hearts on **fire**.

Conclusion

My good friends in Christ.... On this Pentecost Sunday... we are reminded that God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit. And now, with that gift... we are called by our God to reach out to others. And so I would ask you today... to start praying about someone that you could invite to church.

As I have shared before... this summer I am going to focus off and on

Renew... repurpose... and rebuild.

Renew is for the Council to unite in vision.

Repurpose is to invite those to church who once attended Immanuel.

Rebuild... is to invite to church a friend who is not active in a church.

May the Lord bless us this day... as we pray to be
the Earth, Wind, and Fire.

Amen.

Now, may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.