

IT IS PENTECOST! After MELVIN NEWLAND, MINISTER of RIDGE CHAPEL, KANSAS

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On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. (Act 2:1-6 NIV)...

We celebrate the birth of Jesus & all the world pauses to celebrate Christmas with us. We celebrate His resurrection, & most of the world recognizes Easter as special. But today is Pentecost, & hardly anyone realizes it. Yet, this day is important, because Pentecost is the birthday of the Church, & God has given us the wonderful opportunity of being a part of it.

In the 2nd chapter of the Book of Acts we read about the beginning of the Church. The first chapter tells us of Jesus meeting with the apostles on the Mt. of Olives & telling them that they are to be His witnesses to all the world. He also tells them that they are to wait in Jerusalem until they receive power from on high. Then He ascends out of their sight.

So they go to Jerusalem to wait & pray. And then the amazing events happen that we read earlier. In the midst of all this excitement, the apostle Peter spoke up & got the crowd's attention "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:36-39 NIV)

ILL. There is a story about 3 prospectors who found a rich vein of gold in California during the gold rush days. They realized what a great discovery they had, & decided, "We've a really good thing going here as long as no one else finds out about it." So they each took a vow to keep it secret.

Then they headed for town to file their claims & get the equipment necessary to mine the gold. True to their vows, they didn't say a word to anybody. They filed their claim, bought the equipment, & headed back to their mine. But when they did, a crowd of people followed them.

And the reason was because the expression on their faces had given them away. Their faces were aglow in anticipation of the wealth that soon would be theirs. People knew that they must have found something very special. So a crowd followed them out of town.

It's kind of sad, isn't it, that some have the impression that when we come to church that it is all gloom & doom, & that there is nothing here to really bring joy into our lives? The truth is that people should see us and know that we have found a treasure that is real and precious; it should shine from our faces

Pentecost says that the early Christians discovered joy unspeakable in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again & again, Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord always, & again I say, Rejoice!"

Pentecost was a once in history event, when the Church was born. So let me share with you three things that we learn from "Pentecost."

First, we see that the Church was created by God. Jesus came into the world, & after His death & burial & resurrection, the Church is formed. The Church comes into reality on the Day of Pentecost.

Sometimes we act as if we think that Simon Peter called a meeting of the apostles & said to them, "Now we are here today to talk about whether or not we ought to start a Church." They discuss that for a while, & then

James makes a motion that they start a Church. John seconds the motion, & they vote to start a Church. Of course, it didn't happen that way! The Word said, "Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven." We need to understand God started the Church! God created the Church. God brought the Church into being, & it is His Church, not ours. We are just a part of it.

The Church may never be the most popular institution in the world, because the true Church goes counter to popular culture. You see, God wants the Church to stand for the truth, to be unshakable in our presentation of the Gospel, because the Church belongs to God.

Secondly, the mission of the Church is to communicate the love of God to a lost & dying world. It is really a shame that the whole idea of speaking in tongues has become such a controversial issue. When you read about Pentecost, the truth that comes to the surface is that God gave the gift of tongues to the apostles for one purpose, & that was for the purpose of communication.

They had a problem with communication because people had come from many different nations. Because God wanted each of them to hear the message in his own language, He performed a miracle, & He gave the apostles the gift of tongues so that they could communicate His message.

The mission has never changed, the moment you become a Christian, the moment I become a Christian, God commissions us to share this simple message with our little section of the world. That is the mission of the Church.

Thirdly, the goal of the Church is to establish a fellowship that is unique. Imagine these early Christians after they first hear the good news about Jesus? On the Day of Pentecost there are 3,000 new converts, & they suddenly share something that has never been shared before.

All of them know that they are guilty, that they have crucified Christ with their sins. But now they have repented of their sins. They've been baptized. They've been redeemed, & they've been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, they are part of a new society, a changed people that God had made different & new. They were "born again."

No wonder their number quickly grew to 5,000, & then into multitudes as the Church spread throughout Jerusalem. More & more people were attracted to them. It was different from anything else in all the world.

The Church must always be that. Most institutions are only interested in what they can get from you, but the Church is about giving. Many may take advantage of you, but the Church is where you can come & hear the truth, & be ministered to, & needs will be met in your life. Knowing that you won't be rejected, that you'll be accepted & loved, brothers & sisters, the family of God.

The world changed after Pentecost because of the Church's influence on that world. And it ought to be the same today. We can just be ourselves with all of our warts & blemishes & scrapes & scratches, & find love & acceptance, because that is what the Church is to be, the family of God.

I invite you to be a part of that fellowship this morning as we extend the invitation of God. If you want to know the fellowship of God and the Church, please make yourself known, so someone can pray with you. Now let us stand & sing?