

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’
(NIV 84)

Theme: Christ’s Promises fulfilled

1. In Sending his Holy Spirit.
2. In saving his believers.

Reliability is an important characteristic to have, whether it’s you personally or your friends and family. You want to surround yourself with people who are reliable. We all know people who are and who aren’t reliable. Some don’t have the ability to do what they promised to do, or they didn’t get it done on time, or they just simply never did it. There are people who make all sorts of promises—some with the best of intentions, and some who just say what you want to hear, but have no plan or desire to actually follow through on their promises. When they promise you something you think to yourself, “Yeah, okay; I’ll believe it when I see it.”

Then there are those who are reliable, those who will follow through on their promises no matter how inconvenient it may be for them. When they promise you something you know that they’ll almost always come through for you—almost, 99% of the time they’ll come through for you and do what they promised. But not all the time—no one is 100% reliable. That is because we are sinful. We forget; we are unable to do something that we thought we could do; a scheduling conflict comes up and we are unable to keep a promise to someone. We’ve all been burned by someone who didn’t keep his promise and we’ve all been unable to keep promises.

Before Jesus left he made promises to his disciples. For example, we read in today’s gospel that Jesus promised his disciples on Maundy Thursday, **the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.** Even though he would be up in heaven, Jesus promised his disciples that they wouldn’t be alone because he was going to send them the Holy Spirit who would be with them through the gospel.

He reminded his disciples of this promise right before he ascended into heaven, **Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.** And when the disciples asked him when he would keep his promise he said, **It is not for you to know the times or**

dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

So the disciples waited in Jerusalem. And after ten days it was the festival of Pentecost, one of the three festivals for which every Jewish male was to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate. It was on that day when the disciples were gathered together in a room at the temple when Jesus kept his promise by sending the Holy Spirit. The first indication we get is that there was the sound of wind rushing through the room—an indication of the presence of God. The Greek word for Spirit is the same word as wind; a connection not lost on Jesus and his disciples on the first Easter evening when he “made wind” by breathing **on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit.**

The second sign given of the Holy Spirit’s presence is the tongues of fire sitting on top of the disciples. This fire did not burn them; but was simply a sign of the presence of God like the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the wilderness. The fact that they looked like tongues points to the third sign: the ability to speak in tongues. Remember what Jesus said about what they would do when the Holy Spirit was given to them: They would spread the gospel throughout the world. On the day of Pentecost the disciples were suddenly able to speak foreign languages—people from all over the world were able to hear the gospel in their own native language. Although we don’t assume that the disciples were able to keep this ability to speak these languages, it is an indication of what they were to do—go throughout the world preaching the good news to all creation; and the Holy Spirit would be with them the whole time.

Everyone in the temple was confused and amazed; some accused the disciples of being drunk. So Peter stood up and pointed out that it was too early for them to be drunk—no this was the Lord keeping his promise, not just to the disciples before he was taken up into heaven, but also the fulfillment of what he said through the prophet Joel, **In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.** Jesus kept his promise by sending the Holy Spirit.

If he didn’t we’d be completely lost. We don’t know God by nature. We don’t know who he is and what he has done for us and we don’t care to know. There is nothing in us that is inclined toward God. We

were completely dead in our sins when we were born. We can do nothing but sin by nature—everything we did was against God’s will or not done in the proper motivation. And even now as Christians we still fail to obey God’s commands, each and every day we sin against him. And those sins deserve nothing but God’s wrath and punishment. And so we can’t save ourselves—our sins condemn us; we can’t earn God’s favor. It is faith that receives salvation, but we can’t believe on our own—if the choice to believe was ever up to us, we’d never choose to believe in Jesus. We were born as his enemies. The message of the gospel is foolish to all of us by nature. And so there is no possible way that we can save ourselves.

That is why Jesus had to send us his Holy Spirit. He is the one brings us to faith. He does this whenever and wherever the gospel is found—whether it is in Word or Sacrament, the Holy Spirit works through it to bring to faith, strengthen faith, and keep us in the one true faith. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, **no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.**

Toward the end of our text Peter quotes Joel as he talks about the Last Days, which the day of Pentecost ushered in, **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** And we all call on the name of the Lord because the Holy Spirit has brought us to faith in the Lord Jesus through the gospel. By the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace we believe in Jesus and call on his name, thus receiving the blessings of salvation he won for us through his suffering and death on the cross and by his resurrection from the dead.

Our text for today only contains the beginning of Peter’s sermon to the people in the Temple on that Pentecost. At the end of this sermon Peter again points out the connection between faith and the Holy Spirit. **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.** Through baptism we receive the forgiveness of sins the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is faith which receives forgiveness. Through baptism the Holy Spirit lives in us for he brought us to faith and gave us understanding. Those who have this gift of the Holy Spirit will be saved since they are those who call on the name of the Lord.

Through that sermon one sermon 3000 people were brought to faith. The Holy Spirit convicted their hearts and comforted them with the gospel through this one sermon of Peter. They were baptized into the

name of the triune God. 3000—by one sermon! That is the power of the Holy Spirit!

It's hard to say how many people were brought to faith and kept in the one true faith by the Holy Spirit working through the gospel here at Holy Cross the last 65 years. We could, I suppose, to the best of our knowledge, count up the number of baptisms, confirmations, and funerals over the past years. But that only covers part of the story. But what I know is this: The same gospel that the Holy Spirit used to bring 3000 to faith that one day is the same gospel he uses today. He still works by the same means of grace—the gospel and Word and Sacrament. For the past 65 years the Holy Spirit has worked through the gospel here at Holy Cross, just as he has worked through the gospel throughout time and all around the world. It is the same message of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and his victory and resurrection from the dead; the same message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone apart from works that the Holy Spirit uses to work faith and save. We praise and thank God that he has kept our congregation faithful to this gospel for the past 65 years and that he has given us this awesome privilege and responsibility to share his gospel with others in Standish and beyond.

The Lord says in Isaiah, **As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.** Our job is simply to be the sower—to cast the seeds of the gospel throughout Standish and beyond. Our job is not to convince or bring to faith, that belongs to the Holy Spirit. But we can rest assured that when we are doing our work, the Holy Spirit is right behind us doing us, working through the gospel that we teach and share with others.

And so we do whatever we can to help the spread of the gospel—both within our congregation and outside of it. Whether it's by telling your friends and your neighbors about their Savior, inviting someone to attend Church with you, visiting someone in the hospital, teaching young children God's Word, supporting the work of our congregation through your offerings, using your gifts and abilities to take care of the Lord's house—whatever it may be, we do everything we can to spread

the gospel. And we know that the Lord keeps his promises. He will work through that gospel and bring many to faith.

Throughout the years we as individuals and as a congregation may not have been as reliable as we should have been—we may not have always done our part to spread the gospel. So we do the best we can now—rededicating ourselves and our congregation to the teaching of the pure word of God to the members of our congregation, and to sharing the sweet message of the gospel to those outside of our church family. And since the Lord keeps his promises, we know that the Holy Spirit will work through that gospel, bring many to faith and as a result they will call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Amen.