



Growth Group Spring 2020

How it All Began

May 31, 2020 - Acts 2:1-13

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

Pentecost was the second of the three great harvest festivals of Judaism, coming between Passover and Tabernacles. In the Old Testament it is referred to as the Festival of Weeks or Festival of the Firstfruits. The first term refers to its coming a “week of weeks” after Passover, the second term to the fact that an offering of two loaves, prepared from the wheat harvest, was made on this day. After the exile, Pentecost also began to be seen as the anniversary of “the giving of the law” on Mt. Sinai. The thinking was that Moses and the people of Israel traveled for about 50 days, before Moses would have gone to the top of Mt. Sinai to receive the law.

It was on Pentecost that the Holy Spirit arrived. Jesus had talked about the Holy Spirit throughout the gospels, but the most detailed description comes in chapters 14-16 of the gospel of John. In John 14:26, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will teach the disciples all things and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said to them. The Holy Spirit would be the counselor or advocate for the disciples, as well as for all who believed in Jesus.

We are not told exactly who was gathered together in verse 1, but it is likely that the 120, mentioned in Acts 1:15, is the group that was gathered. Luke describes the arrival of the Holy Spirit as an event which was audible, visible and culminated with inspired speech. In the Greek language the word “pneuma” can mean both wind and spirit. Ezekiel 37:9-14 talks about the wind or breath of Yahweh as God’s Spirit who brings life to the valley of dry bones. The Holy Spirit’s arrival is bringing life and hope.

The word used in the gospel for the Holy Spirit is the word paraclete. This is the idea of an advocate and would be the one who stands beside you. The word has to do with being called to the side of, with the purpose of helping, and has the connotation of having someone on your side in a courtroom. Scripture teaches us that the Holy Spirit is the one who is on our side as we make our way through life.

We read that there were faithful Jews living in Jerusalem who were nearby for the Pentecost festival. The surprise was that they were hearing “Galileans” speaking in their own native languages. This “sign” was preparing them for Peter’s speech. They were amazed at not only what they were seeing, but also by what they were hearing. They wondered what does this all mean.



Pentecost is often seen as the birth of the church. The message that Jesus had been sharing with his disciples was now the message that they would carry into the world. In Acts 1:8 Jesus told the disciples that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit and they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. If you continue reading Acts 2, you see Peter proclaiming the message of Jesus and thousands of Jewish believers coming to faith in Jesus. The rest of the book of Acts tells the story of the gospel message going to the ends of the earth.

Exploring the Text

Read Acts 2:1-13

¹ 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 their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our 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."

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Have you ever traveled to a place where you did not speak the language? How did this make you feel?
- 2) What do you think is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity? And in the lives of believers?
- 3) Why do you think the coming of the Holy Spirit happened in such a public manner?
- 4) What does this passage say about unity in the church? In society, or amongst different cultures?
- 5) Why do you think some people heard their native language while others thought the disciples were drunk? If you were there, do you think you would be more like the people in verse 12 or verse 13?
- 6) Can someone be a believer and not be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- 7) Have you ever feared being mocked for sharing your faith? What about shunned or cast out of a group?
- 8) What is "Your own tongue?" Not just what language(s) you speak, but how and to whom are you really communicating? Are you sharing the "Good News" with them in "their own tongue?"

Bonus. Who can you reach that the church can't