

Day of Pentecost - A (2026)

Acts 2:1-21

Psalm 104:25-35, 37

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

John 20:19-23

‘Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in our own native language?... in our own languages we hear them speak about God’s deeds of power.” All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”’ In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“They are filled with new wine,” sneered some of the large crowd assembled that early morning in Jerusalem, suggesting that these prophesying Galileans were drunk. New wine indeed, we respond knowingly; not badly fermented wine that might in fact cause one to become physically drunk, but new wine permeated with the Holy Spirit; a new spiritual wine that entered the scene like the sound of a rushing wind; a new spiritual wine that appeared as of tongues of fire that rested upon those in the upper room; a new spiritual wine that filled all who would hear and respond with the zeal for mission that set in motion the change from small gatherings of the faithful into throngs of followers that witnessed by and to the power of this new wine in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. This new wine is that of which John the Baptist had proclaimed, not of water but a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Today, we celebrate once again the arrival of this new spiritual wine that sounds like wind, looks like fire, and fills those who drink deeply of it as though they might appear to be inebriated. This indwelling Spirit of God unifies people of all languages, tribes, and nations. This third person of the Trinity speaks a message of divine power and instills selfless service while empowering enthusiastic witness, whose presence is always near, blowing where it wills. We celebrate the proclaiming words of God’s appointed prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Joel, who foretold that God would pour lavishly upon his people his Spirit where hearts of

stone would be replaced by hearts of flesh; that his Spirit would bring blessing upon his people and their children; and where sons and daughters will prophesy, old men will dream dreams, and young men will see visions. Today, we celebrate this outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all people. It is this same Spirit that moved across the face of the waters in creation, that enlivens our lives and directs God's people today, and is promised to be our companion until the end of the age.

The workings of the Holy Spirit and the Christian life, what we often call discipleship, are inextricably bound together. The Holy Spirit is that part of God's very essence that lives within us. At Pentecost, this gift of the Holy Spirit was made available to all people, not only to God's 'chosen ones.' It was the sound of a violent wind and tongues of fire that ignited an explosion of Christian witness throughout the city, claiming some 3,000 converts that very day, and it continued as the people devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. This life of new wine, experienced by these new converts, was beginning to shape a growing community grounded in learning, lived with joy, and committed to both God and their fellow believers. As a result, Luke writes, 'day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.'

The Holy Spirit's arrival at Pentecost fulfilled Jesus' promise that, while he would no longer be with his disciples, they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. This is the same Spirit that breathed life into dead men's bones in the Valley of Dry Bones and overshadowed the Virgin Mary at the incarnation. This Spirit, this Helper, will guide them, and us, into all truth and bring to all believers remembrance of all things Jesus taught. The Spirit speaks that which he hears and testifies to that which comes from God. The Spirit convicts the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. This same Spirit helps in our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. These are but a small sample of the characteristics of this living being, this divine person within the Trinity.

Through all these manifestations, the Holy Spirit is at work in us, empowering our lives of Christian witness to a world soaked in darkness, evil, greed, and hate, yet infused with the love, compassion, hope, goodness, kindness, and gentleness of spirit that comes from the Creator of the cosmos. The Holy Spirit enables us to do the work God has given us, which we are unable to do by ourselves. The Holy Spirit continues to support and enable the work of mission and ministry initiated by Jesus and will do so until the Parousia, the Second Coming of Christ. We are the current generation of witnesses to the mighty deeds and power of God, and it is the Holy Spirit that animates this proclamation and upholds and deepens our faith.

Dear friends, the Spirit is alive and well within us, always ready for us to spring into action by his prompting. Part of our growth as disciples is to pay attention to how we fill our lives; is it with the new wine of the Spirit or with the old wine of the world? It takes daily attention to our intake of new wine to ensure that we, as the apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, are “to be continually filled with the Spirit.” We are to be filled again and again with the new wine that offers encouragement, hope, peace, love, compassion, and joy; a life filled to the brim with the presence of the Spirit that transforms our very being. Like those in Jerusalem on that day some two thousand years ago, when the power of the Spirit transformed the lives of thousands, we too can witness to this same power in the world today. Trust me, it will be noticed, and to God be the glory. Amen.