

Sermon for Pentecost 2013

Collect Prayer of the day: *Almighty and ever-living God, You fulfilled Your promise by sending the gift of the Holy spirit to unite disciples of all nations in the cross and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. By the preaching of the Gospel spread this gift to the ends of the earth; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

Amen.

The Word of the Lord for this sermon is taken from Numbers 11, 11-12. 14-17. 24-25:

Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favour in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,' to the land that you swore to give their fathers? I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favour in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone. So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.

*Prayer: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, enlighten our minds and preach Your Word to us so that our faith will be strengthened and make us truly thankful for Your means of Grace. **Amen.***

Dear congregation in Christ!

Two places in the New Testament of His Bible, God explains to you why He wrote today's Old Testament for you. First God says in 1 Corinthians 10:11, **"These things happened to them [that is, to the people of Israel]... for our instruction."** With these Words, God wants you to know that He wrote today's Old Testament for your sake, in order to teach you something that is vitally important. God also says in Romans 15:4, "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that ... through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." With these Words, God is telling you why He wants you to hear today's Old Testament and take it to heart: God is going to give you ENCOURAGEMENT, STRENGTH, and HOPE through the what people have said here today: **"Now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."**

It was the same people whom God had saved from Pharaoh who were now complaining before Him. They complained before Moses, but God took it personal. This complaining got too much to bear for Moses. So he asked God to help him. This is when God told Moses to select seventy elders from the people and make them stand before the Lord at the tent of the meeting. God came and took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and gave it to these seventy to assist Moses. Immediately they started to prophesy.

When we compare this to what happened on Pentecost we see that God was pouring out of the same Spirit onto the disciples of Christ and immediately they also started to prophesy. What were they saying? They were telling the mighty works of God. They were proclaiming the Gospel in all the different native languages **"from every nation under heaven"** [Acts2,5]! The cause for the great amazement was that all could hear the Gospel in their own native language. This is what the Holy Spirit did and still does. He empowers people to preach the Gospel of Christ and He opens the understanding for it. Furthermore He provides the right means so that the mighty works of salvation done in Christ are heard and believed. At Pentecost He provided for the means of language.

But even then, on Pentecost, not all were impressed with what they heard and saw. Some were mocking the disciples. Although the disciples had received the Holy Spirit in a truly supernatural way not all were convinced by it. However many people listened to the sermon of the Holy Spirit. In the OT foreshadow the seventy assistants of Moses only prophesied for the time when they were at the tent. Then they stopped. This was different on Pentecost. The preaching carried on and carries on until our day.

There is another vital difference between the OT foreshadow and the NT fulfilment: In the OT the Holy Spirit was only poured out on very specific people. This outpouring never carried on or propagated any further. On Pentecost this was different. The Holy Spirit was poured out on **"all flesh"**. Devout men from **"every nation under heaven"** were gathered on that day by God's divine providence. But how did the further outpouring happen? How was and is the Holy Spirit handed out even up until today? The Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples accompanied by the sound of a wind and the divided tongues appearing on the disciples.

This way of pouring out the Spirit did not carry on. This was a once-off phenomenon. The flames did not jump over onto the three thousand. Rather, Baptism became the way through which of the Holy Spirit would be given. This was another means the Holy Spirit provided so that all flesh could receive of the Spirit of God. Make disciples of all nations, Jesus commanded His disciples, by baptising them and teaching them. This was happening on Pentecost and carries on ever since.

You and I are part of this mighty work of God which He faithfully carries out through His people and His means. You were baptised into Christ. You have heard the Gospel in your mother tongue. You have received of God's Holy Spirit. Through these "natural" means God has achieved a true miracle. Out of no faith He created faith, in you. He sustains this faith by the means of the Holy Spirit, by proclaiming the Word and handing out the Sacrament. So these means are true spiritual means. May the Holy Spirit give us eyes to realise this. In this regard the OT reading wants to warn

and encourage us that we don't look down on the means God provides while we are still walking in the spiritual dessert.

The world and the flesh are soon fed up with the means of the Spirit. They want exciting things for the eyes, eye-candy. They want to become enthusiastic about ever new experiences in our emotion. But God has grown His mega-church from 12 to global Christianity with His means only! May the Holy Spirit enlighten us today to see and value anew the means He chose to accomplish His mission successfully. May He make us truly thankful for it. And if others grumble or mock us about these non-exotic means let us take comfort in the fact that you and I have the very same Spirit God put on the seventy with Moses that day, the very same holy Spirit that was poured out on the disciples and the three-thousand on the day of Pentecost.

This is something to rejoice about! This is God doing His mighty work in us, with us and through us!

In the name of Jesus, **Amen.**

Prayer:

*Dear Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forgive us where we have looked down on Your means of Grace. Enlightened by Your Word and Spirit give us a true desire for these your gifts. Make us truly thankful for them. All glory, laud and honour belongs to You. **Amen.***