Pentecost Acts 2:1-21
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Pentecost – "What Does This Mean?"
I. God keeps His Word.
II. God wants all people to be saved.
III. God empowers us to share His saving Word.

Dear Christian friends,

**"What does this mean?"** That question practically echoes **throughout** the catechism. ***"You shall have no other gods"*** – "WHAT does this mean?" ***"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God"*** – "What does this mean?" SO IT GOES through all ten commandments and the **Conclusion**. It's the SAME THING with the Apostles' Creed. "**I believe** in God the Father almighty" – "WHAT does this mean?"

Luther wasn't the **first person** to ask, "What does this mean?" The people at the **first Pentecost** were asking, ***"What does this mean?"*** They were ***"confused – completely baffled – amazed – perplexed."*** They had no explanation for what they were **hearing** and **seeing**.

There is still confusion today about the **Holy Spirit** and His role in our lives. So today we ask, "WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?" **Pentecost means** 1)that God keeps His Word, 2)that God wants all people to **be saved** and 3)that God empowers us to **share** His saving Word.

**I. God keeps His Word.**

Pentecost was **originally** a major OT festival. It's called Pentecost because it came 50 days **after the start** of the grain harvest. Pentecost marked the end of the **spring harvest** season. It was a celebration of **God's goodness** – a thanksgiving for **another year's crop**. God had BIG PLANS for **this particular** Pentecost.

The apostles and Christians were gathered ***"in one place"*** SOMEWHERE in Jerusalem. ***"Suddenly a sound like the rushing of a violent wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw divided tongues that were like fire resting on each one of them."*** Notice that it is ONLY THE SOUND of ***"a violent wind"*** – not actual wind. The same goes with the fire – NOT REAL flames but ***"divided tongues that were LIKE fire."*** Those signs were meant to DRAW ATTENTION – to let people know that God was DOING SOMETHING SPECIAL. A large crowd gathered around the apostles. They were impressed – and TOTALLY CONFUSED. ***"What does this mean?"*** they asked.

Peter explained, ***"This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."*** Joel lived 800 years before Christ. He wrote a SMALL book – just **three chapters** long. But that small book has a BIG PROPHECY – God's promise of **Pentecost**.

It **may have** been a wait of 800 years but God KEPT that promise. At just the **right time** ACCORDING to God's plans and schedule ***"the day of Pentecost came."*** Pentecost is MORE PROOF that God always keeps His Word. Pentecost MEANS we can confidently trust God's **Word** and **promises**. There's no need for us to CROSS our fingers or HOLD our breath **when it comes** to ANY of God's promises!

Notice how Peter QUOTES JOEL with ***"This is what God says."*** Let's not overlook one of the Holy Spirit's MOST IMPORTANT works – the Bible. Years later Peter wrote, ***"Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*** The Bible is GOD'S PERFECT – TRUE – TRUSTWORTHY Word. The Holy Spirit so guided the writers

so that they wrote God's very words **without making** any mistakes. The Holy Spirit gave us the Bible to ***"make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."***

***"What does this mean?"*** Pentecost means…

**II. God wants all people to be saved.**

***"When the day of Pentecost came."*** Pentecost reminds us that God has a SCHEDULE for HIS PLANS. **In the Bible** the Holy Spirit reveals that God's plans go back into eternity BEFORE God had **even created** this world. The Holy Spirit reveals that ALREADY BACK then God planned to save us sinners THROUGH Jesus. Adam and Eve's **fall into sin** didn't take God BY SURPRISE. God also fully understood the CONSEQUENCES of that one sin. ***"Sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way death came upon all men."*** Just HOW HORRIBLE A TOLL that **sin has taken** the Spirit reveals with these words, ***"There is no one righteous, not even one. All have turned away, they have together become worthless."*** That's God talking **not just** ABOUT OTHER people but about you and me too. To make that point EVEN CLEARER **look how many** people will argue with God and say, "I'm not THAT BAD!" God bluntly replies, ***"The soul that sins, it shall die"*** – and YOU are going to die!

But look what God HAS DONE! The crowds heard the apostles ***"declaring in (their) own languages the wonderful works of God."*** From Peter's Pentecost sermon we know those ***"wonderful works of God"*** CENTERED ON Jesus and all He's done for us. AS God had planned it **in eternity** SO God was now carrying it out **in time**. Jesus – the eternal Son of God – was born one of us to TAKE THE PLACE of **all people** under God's law. **As our substitute** Jesus perfectly obeyed every commandment His whole life through. **In our place** Jesus suffered and died on the cross to PERSONALLY and FULLY PAY for **all** our sins. Then came Easter morning – Jesus risen triumphant from the dead. Now ascended into heaven Jesus is ruling **all** things for the good of His Church and He has sent the Holy Spirit to be our ABIDING ***"Counselor"*** and ***"Teacher."***

WHAT Jesus all did – His perfect life, innocent death, glorious resurrection – He did FOR ALL people. ***"God so loved the WORLD that He gave His only-begotten Son."*** Jesus is ***"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the WORLD."*** Jesus is ***"the atoning sacrifice not only for our sins but for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD." "God is not willing that ANY should perish but that EVERYONE should come to repentance.*** By enabling the disciples to ***"declare the wonders of God"*** in those DIFFERENT FOREIGN LANGUAGES God again showed that He WANTS ALL people to be saved.

Pentecost reminds us NOT TO LIMIT **mission work** or **outreach** to just CERTAIN KINDS of people – people with money so they can **help pay** the bills. People who are healthy so they can PITCH IN and help. Jesus reached out to **tax collectors**, **prostitutes**, adulterers, etc. – to the BIG SINNERS – the SCUM of His day. Jesus didn't condone their sin in any way. IN LOVE Jesus called them to **repent** and forgave them.

GOD WANTS ALL people to be saved but that happens in ONLY ONE WAY. ***"Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."*** To ***"call on God's name"*** is TO TRUST what God tells us **about Himself** in the Bible. To ***"call on God's name"*** is to do as Peter did when he was sinking in the waves. ***"Lord, save me!"*** he cried. To ***"call on"*** Jesus is to COUNT ON Jesus to save us from our **sin** and **guilt**, from **death** and hell. To ***"call on"*** Jesus is to RELY ON Jesus to bring us safely home to heaven.

Before anyone can ***"call on"*** Jesus they must FIRST HEART about Jesus and what He's all done for us. ***"Faith comes from hearing the message."*** The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to fluently speak those foreign languages so they could tell these people about Jesus.

**III. God empowers us to share His saving Word.**

OVER AND OVER during the Easter season we've heard the call **to share** God's Word. ***"Go and tell"*** the Easter angel told the women. ***"As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you,"*** the risen Jesus told His disciples. Before He ascended Jesus said, ***"You will be My witnesses to the ends of the earth"*** – ***"preach the gospel to all creation."*** God wants EACH ONE of us busy living and sharing His Word.

Pentecost shows that God also EMPOWERS us **to share** His Word. ***"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you,"*** Jesus had promised the apostles. AS God had promised through Joel He was ***"pouring out His Spirit on all people."*** That ***"pouring out"*** wasn't a ONE SHOT – ONE DAY – deal. All during these ***"last days"*** God is ***"pouring out"*** the Holy Spirit to EMPOWER US to **share** His Word.

We might be afraid to share God's Word. What will people THINK of us? What if they LAUGH at me – make fun of me? What if I don't know the ANSWERS to their questions? We may tell ourselves, "It WON'T DO **any good**. They won't listen to me." Even worse we may say, "That's PASTOR'S JOB." You can be sure the **devil** and our **sinful natures** will TEAM UP to get us to shut up and not share Jesus with others.

***"I will pour out My Spirit on ALL people – your sons and daughters – young men and old men – My servants, both men and women."*** CATCH God's vision! SEE parents teaching their children about Jesus – setting them a **godly** example at home – giving them a **solid, Christian** education – bringing them to church every week. **See** young people preparing to be **future** pastors, teachers, missionaries. **See** all the members WORKING TOGETHER to share God's Word – everyone PITCHING IN to **help out** – all bringing GENEROUS gifts **to spread** the gospel. See young and old STUDYING God's Word together – reading their Bibles – growing in their faith – and THEN LIVING and **sharing** their faith. Are you thinking, "You're DREAMING, Pastor! That will NEVER happen!" Why can't it? Is the Holy Spirit a WIMP? God is still ***"pouring out His Spirit"*** on EACH ONE of us. The only monkey wrench in **God's plan** is OUR OWN lazy – stubborn – **selfish** sinful natures.

***"In the last days."*** Pentecost means that THE LAST DAY – that ***"great and glorious day of the LORD"*** – is coming. That gives urgency to our **sharing** the gospel because ONLY THOSE ***"who call on the name of the LORD will be saved."*** Doesn't that fact SET OUR PRIORITIES? Are you – your children – your **grandchildren** – ready to meet your Maker? Will I – **you** – your **children** – hear, ***"Come, you who are blessed by My Father"*** OR will it instead be, ***"Depart from Me, you who are cursed"***? THROUGH the gospel the Holy Spirit has worked **saving faith** in our hearts. NOW the Holy Spirit wants to use EACH ONE of us to share God's **saving Word** with others.

WHAT does Pentecost mean? ***"This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*** Amen.

Confession of faith – Explanation to the 3rd Article