

**Pray:** Heavenly Father pour out your Holy Spirit upon us as we gather today in your presence. Fill us Lord as we seek to live receptive lives continually being filled with everything you have for us. We ask that you would strengthen and equip us today for Spirit filled service where ever you send us. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen!

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**1. Today we celebrate Pentecost and the amazing picture of the church bursting into action at Jerusalem.**

For some people, when they think “Holy Spirit and Pentecost” they think “spontaneous, spur of the moment, unplanned or unforeseen things happening.”

Maybe, but the readings today show just how intricately God planned this event. I wonder what you heard in the readings for today?

We see God’s planning in action as Jesus speaks with His disciples in the gospel reading and when Peter shares His message with the people in Acts. Both Jesus and Peter (in his sermon) use rich Old Testament imagery and context to set the scene for what’s happening at Pentecost.

**God is an orderly and intricate planner!**

In the gospel Jesus says,

***“Peace be with you; as the Father is sending me, even so, I am sending you”.***

And then he breathes on His disciples giving them the Holy Spirit and commanding them to bind and loose sins or to forgive or withhold forgiveness of sins. By doing this Jesus is enacting Isaiah 61:1

***“<sup>a</sup> The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor [not just financially poor – but poor in Spirit- people like us who need God’s help every day of our lives]. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners...”***

Jesus fulfilled this scripture at Nazareth when he began His ministry and also today [Pentecost Sunday] when he does some succession planning with the 12 – filling them with the Holy Spirit and empowering them to carry on this ministry in his place.

Meanwhile in Acts, we find ourselves in Jerusalem where there are Jews everywhere from a host of different nations. They’re there for a big festival called the Feast of weeks, which was a Holy Day for the people. This feast was also known as Pentecost because it happened 50 days after the first week of Passover.

It was then that the powerful Spirit of God burst onto the scene and there are fiery tongues and people speaking in foreign languages. It’s here that Peter boldly stands up and addresses the people and preaches from the Old Testament book of Joel.

He quotes the Lord speaking through Joel some 500 years earlier saying,

***“that in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...he goes on to say, ..And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”***

There is a ***continuity*** taking place here – a fulfilment and continuation of the biblical story.

We are part of God’s big story of the Old and New Testaments and we live and minister in those last days that the Lord spoke of through the prophet Joel. There is a continuity and excitement building in God’s story that is also present in our story.

**2. Pentecost is exciting, not because of people speaking in foreign languages – but because people who have never heard the Spirit filled Gospel get to hear it in their language!**

So many people only see the tongues or the visible manifestation of fire and miss the key focus – what God is doing for people! Other people lose focus by thinking we have to transplant the events of Pentecost Day in Jerusalem and try to replicate it here, as if there is a formula we can follow that will blow the church doors open with the Holy Spirit.

They think if we pray hard enough and have enough faith – then maybe the church won’t die and there will be a renewal.

As it happens today we’re issuing a call to prayer here in Cairns – so please pray for renewal and that human hearts would not resist the power of the Holy Spirit.

But also remember Jesus’ words to Peter after he declared to Jesus, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”** Jesus told him *that even his words were received from God...* Jesus also said upon this rock (this confession) I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. So who builds His church? **Christ does** – through the power of the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost.

The key focus of Pentecost is that people from all over get to hear about the mighty acts of God, have their lives transformed by the message and then take that word and spread it to every corner of the globe!

It’s just how God set things up! *That’s how God continues to transform your life and ministry too...*

Today we even get a peek into the mindset of people hearing the Spirit filled message spoken in different tongues as the Spirit enabled people, **“...we hear them telling in our own tongues, the mighty acts of God.”**

Which mighty acts do you think they were hearing about? Was it:

- The creation story
- The crossing of the Red Sea that opened up and divided so the people could pass through and be saved?
- The thick cloud of a trembling Mt Sinai and the giving of the Law – engraved by the hand of God into stone.
- Pillars of cloud by day and fire by night lighting the way for the people of God.
- Defeating enemies when everything looked impossible
- Was it about the mystery of God taking on flesh and the virgin birth?
- **One thing we can be sure of – is that they heard the message of Jesus and the cross!** The ultimate mighty act of God for the whole world...

Peter does exactly that in verse 22 saying, <sup>22</sup> **“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs [MIGHTY ACTS?], which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. <sup>23</sup> This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.**

Straight out of this amazing scene with tongues of fire and miraculous visions - and Peter points everyone - right away to Jesus and his work on the cross. The mightiest act of God... God had a plan for Pentecost and He has a plan to keep pouring out His Holy Spirit into your life and the lives around you today.

**3. I wonder what you think...Do you see any mighty works and wonders and signs today?** Do you see God pouring out His spirit on you and the people here?

What did you see today **...when ‘NAMES’** were baptized into God’s family. Was that God performing miraculous things in our midst? Absolutely. We saw with our own eyes... **the curse of the fall**, the power of death and dark spiritual forces defeated as Jesus claimed them as His own.

As God marked them with the sign of the cross and anointed them as members of His Royal Priesthood, he poured into their lives His forgiveness, his cleansing, his resurrection life and His powerful Holy Spirit that filled the room on Pentecost Day in Jerusalem. You are witnesses today of the mighty acts of God in God’s good time, in the place he determined and with gifts God brought along with him.

Today ‘NAMES’ lives were joined and united to Jesus. They didn’t bring that about – it was a miracle and gift of the Holy Spirit! Through it they were joined to His death and resurrection on the cross –

just as we were at our baptism. And you and I continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit through God’s read and proclaimed word and in bread and wine.

Where are you filled up with the promised Holy Spirit? **Worship**, every time we open the **bible at home** or in **life groups**, every time we **pray the words of God** - we are being filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God that points us to Jesus and the Spirit filled life and ministry that we have all received in Him. And we get to put our spiritual gifts into action pointing to the mighty acts of God every day. Not by our power or authority, but empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the authority of Jesus.

**4. God is still in the business of doing mighty works and wonders and signs in your lives.** I want to point out the elephant in the room that we can so often miss in worship today... Remember those words from Luke’s gospel, ***“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents?”*** There is rejoicing because this is a mighty work of God – repentance and faith are miracles of the Holy Spirit. They are miracles flowing from Pentecost as the Holy Spirit goes to work on us and in us. It clearly means there is a lot of rejoicing amongst the angels today – firstly on account of our baptismal celebrations.

**Why else do you think there might be rejoicing in the presence of angels today?** Let me ask you a question: Would all the sinners in the house please raise their hand?

***Today when we prayed together our prayer of confession, did you repent of your sins?***

***Did you enact exactly what the bible says causes rejoicing in the presence of angels?***

And if you didn’t repent, then a much sadder reality is at play because, as Jesus says in the gospel—your sins are retained.

But for all those who confessed and repented - a mighty act of God took place in your life during that prayer. We confess and repent in this church because we know the Holy Spirit is at work doing amazing things in our lives as we enact God’s Spirit filled word!

**In fact that we are here today declaring that Jesus Christ is Lord is a mighty work and wonder of the Holy Spirit!** It doesn’t end here though does it? No we go out from this place today as Christ bearers, as people filled with the Holy Spirit and as people with mighty things to share.

**5. All this happens in accordance with God’s plan, in the place that God sets apart and on account of God’s gift of the Holy Spirit.** The church is in good hands – because it’s held in the palm of God’s mighty hand instead of ours.

The church is not dying as some keep on saying **[but if I went to a church where I heard that all the time – I may go somewhere else!]** – please don’t ever say that - the church is alive:

We’ve got work to do in the power of the Holy Spirit – but the church isn’t dying – **the world is dying.** In the church:

- People are being filled with the Holy Spirit encountering Jesus in the scriptures and at His table.
- The H.S is at work as people courageously share the mighty works of God where God has placed them in their families and beyond.
- And where Jesus is present among His people (like He is with us today); you won’t find death – but Spirit filled life.

Where do you see yourself in this bold picture of ministry today?

Is there room for repentance and faith in your life – or do you find yourself resisting God and His Spirit?

Are you pessimistic about the future of the church – or do you believe God is able to follow through on His plans and build His church?

And are you open to God using and empowering you to declare His mighty acts this week?

The Holy Spirit is at work in your life – how will you respond?

In Jesus’ name. Amen.