

INI

Joel 2,28-31

Pentecost — 31 May 2009

Greeting: To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you all. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Old Testament lesson which was read earlier:

We hear the voice of the Lord as He spoke through the prophet Joel:

“And it shall come to pass afterward,
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and daughters shall prophecy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions:

²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”

So far the text. Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, our strength and our Redeemer.

Introduction. Everybody loves to joke about the weather. Especially weather forecasting. Even with weather satellites and weather balloons forecasting the weather can be a tricky proposition. Mind you, from now until say October in the Bay Area forecasting isn't too difficult. The big question is how long the marine layer will last before the sun shines.

Almighty God has an easier job. Not only can He do all things, but He can also accurately forecast what He will do, even a long time before it happens. This, in fact, is the case with our text for today, which was probably given to the prophet Joel about 780 years before Christ — although to be 100 per cent accurate, no one knows exactly when Joel lived. But when God says something will happen, He has the power to bring it to pass.

And so God told Joel about how He would give the Holy Spirit to His

people. This brings me to the theme of today's sermon: "**The Promise Of The Holy Spirit.**" I'll develop this theme in three parts:

- 1) The Promise Has Been Fulfilled;**
- 2) The Promise Is Continually Fulfilled;** and,
- 3) The Promise Will Be Perfectly Fulfilled On The Last Day**

1) The Promise Has Been Fulfilled. What did the Almighty tell His prophet Joel?

And it shall come to pass afterward,
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;

"And it shall come to pass" means "to begin." This refers back to a previous verse, in which God said that He will bless His people. This blessing consists of bringing the "early" and "late" rains which will water the earth and bring forth fruit (2,23).

When God is speaking in this manner, He is not forecasting the weather. God is speaking about spiritual blessings and spiritual rain. With these "rains," God promises that He will give unto His people a "Teacher unto Righteousness." And even more, He promises that He will dwell in their midst (2,27).

God has certainly kept His promise to come to dwell among His people. After He took on human form in the womb of the Virgin Mary, He lived on this earth for about thirty years — part of the time in Galilee, part of the time in Judea. He went throughout the land and proclaimed righteousness, that is, the righteousness that counts before God and about which Paul later wrote:

even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all those who believe... (Romans 3,23)

So God's Son Himself became the fulfillment of the prophesy that God would give unto His people a Teacher unto Righteousness.

As we know, it was three days after His sacrificial death on the cross that Jesus arose bodily and victorious from the grave. For the next 40 days He showed Himself to His disciples and those who had followed Him during His earthly

ministry. After 40 days, Jesus ascended into heaven. Shortly before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples “not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised ... For John had baptized with water, but [they] shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 1,4-5).

Thus, 50 days after Easter, the disciples were in all together in one place. Luke tells us:

And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2,2-4)

On that first Pentecost, there were many pilgrims in Jerusalem. This was also a thanksgiving festival of the Jews and there were many from the surrounding countries who would hear the Good News about Jesus from the apostles.

Now the foreign Jews were struck with wonder when they heard men from Galilee speak in foreign languages which the visitors could understand. At first, the people to whom Peter preached thought that Peter and the other apostles were drunk. Peter told them they were wrong. Peter went on to say:

For these men — that is, the other apostles — are not drunk as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day — that is, 9 a.m. —; ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel.

Then Peter read to them today’s Old Testament lesson. Peter, who had been taken from the shores of Galilee by Jesus to become a fisher of men, told the assembled multitude, drawn from all corners of the Mediterranean world, that they were now experiencing what God, through the prophet Joel, had promised would happen!

Now we know that the Holy Spirit had been at work throughout the Old Testament and had been given to individuals. We only have to think of such prophets, priests, and kings who were not only anointed with oil but also with the Holy Spirit.

What, then, makes God’s Pentecost promise new? Now God is pouring out

His Spirit on all flesh — sons and daughters, old men and young men, and male and female slaves. Now God will pour out His Holy Spirit upon “all flesh.” Prior to this, it was as if God had parceled out the Holy Spirit drop-by-drop on individuals, but now God is making no distinction — as Paul says: “There is no partiality with God” (Romans 2,11).

And the Holy Spirit will now come upon all with His gifts. On Pentecost God fulfilled His promise. At the end of Peter’s sermon, we read:

So then, those who had received [Peter’s] word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2,41)

At this testimony we today have every reason to rejoice, because God’s promise was not only fulfilled, but

2) The Promise Is Continually Fulfilled. Let’s look at a letter Paul wrote to his co-worker in the Gospel, Titus. There we read:

[God] saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,⁷ that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3,5-7)

Whenever a person is baptized, God does not let mere water be poured over him, but it is water joined with God’s Word that is poured, a water and Word which richly pours the Holy Spirit on him as well.

And where the Holy Spirit dwells, He also dwells with the rich gift of salvation itself. So God permits us to grasp with faith the joy of salvation which Jesus has brought to completion.

What does this salvation consist of?

Here we have the comfort that Jesus not only died and rose for the sins of the world, and reconciled the world unto God (see 1 John 2,2), but that He also died and rose to earn forgiveness for our sins, which we, in thought, word, and deed daily commit.

The Holy Spirit gives us that faith to confess our sins and trust in Jesus for forgiveness.

That faith, which is God's gift to us, lets us know that on account of Jesus we are God's children (see Romans 8,16).

Finally, the Spirit promises to keep us and strengthen in the "one, true faith," so that as Jesus' heirs we may inherit eternal life.

The Holy Spirit does not only work this in our baptism, but also when we take God's Word unto ourselves, in personal and group Bible study, in devotions, and in public worship. Thus, God's promise through the prophet Joel is continually fulfilled in us daily.

But God did not pour out His Spirit upon us so that we only believe, but also that we would be active in our faith.

According to Joel, we see the example that sons and daughters will prophesy. Here, God is not so much speaking about telling the future, but proclaiming God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, we do have individuals who forecast the future. In Acts, we read of Agabus telling Paul that Paul will be bound and handed over to the heathen (Acts 21,11). But when we speak of "all flesh," we are speaking of God's revelation in Jesus.

To each Christian, yes, to you and I, is given the responsibility of calling people to repentance and offering the forgiveness that God gives only in and through His Son, Jesus Christ. As Peter wrote to the early Christians, as well as to us:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2,9-10)

Friends, let us always remember that God the Holy Spirit does not gather one holy Christian Church only through the preaching of pastors, but also through the witness and proclamation of each individual Christian.

Through God's Word, the Holy Spirit makes us ready and equips us for such a witness. As Peter says:

But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. (1 Peter 3,15)

So with God's grace, we want to be temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6,19), and do our utmost to bring Jesus to as many as possible.

We know how wonderful it is that God through His Word daily pours out His Spirit upon us. Thus, we should in no way doubt that:

3) The Promise Will Be Perfectly Fulfilled On The Last Day. When we read Joel and know our Bibles, we know that first and foremost God's promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on Pentecost. But there is more.

Peter, under the guidance of the Spirit Himself, said that "And it shall be in the last days..." (Acts 2,17). The clue for the meaning of "the last days" is not to be found in Joel. It is to be found in Peter.

With the appearance of Jesus in the flesh, the last days have broken into time.

Since Jesus ascension, those whom the Holy Spirit has gathered into one Christian Church, have waited from Jesus return on the Last Day. Thus, the outpouring of the Spirit is bracketed by Jesus' ascension and the Last Day.

Joel knew of the Last Day, the Day of Judgment. He wrote:

And I —that is, the LORD —will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth,
Blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.
The sun shall be turned into darkness,

And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. (2,30-31)

Jesus cited these prophetic words as He spoke of the day on which He would return:

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken,³⁰ and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on clouds of the sky with great power and great glory. (Matthew 29,29-30)

We've seen how true and faithful God is in fulfilling His promises, for example, in pouring out His Holy Spirit upon "all flesh." This is both a word of comfort and a warning. God stands by His Word!

This also applies to the coming Day of Judgment. On this day, all mankind, as well as you and I, must appear before the judgment seat of the all-knowing God. In the power of the Spirit, Paul exhorted the Romans:

For it is written,
"As I live says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall give praise to God."

¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another any more, but rather determine this — not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. (Romans 14,11-13)

And in Hebrews we read:

And there is no creature hidden from His [God's] sight, but all things are laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4,13)

How will we then appear before the eternal Judge? Every sin, whether known or unknown, shall be laid bare. Our thoughts, our words, our deeds, what we have done or left undone, shall all be revealed by God. Our lives will lie open before Him as an open book. Nothing can be or will be hidden. This is indeed a great and terrible day.

You know, when things go wrong, from others we accept all sorts of excuses, whether from children, from spouses, from neighbors, from co-workers, from friends. Perhaps we give such excuses as well. But what sort of excuses count before God? In a word: nothing.

Thus, before God we have no excuses. But God tells us what counts before Him. God tells us:

Whoever calls upon the name of the LORD
Shall be saved.

The Lord's name is the name of which Peter spoke:

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name given under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved. (Acts 4,12)

Of what name is Peter speaking? He tells us:

let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, — by this name this man stands here before you in good health. ¹¹ He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very cornerstone. (Acts 4,10-11)

Yes, Jesus Christ is the Lord, whom God sent for our salvation and deliverance. He is the ground, the cornerstone, upon which His church is built, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2,19-22).

We've know that the Holy Spirit builds the one, holy Christian Church, in

which people are gathered through the Word of the Gospel. Thus, all who have been invited and believe, belong to this holy temple, because God's Spirit dwells in them. Thus each person who is God's dwelling calls on the name of Jesus. He prays to Him and proclaims Jesus' saving work. From this it follows what Paul wrote to the Romans:

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells in you. (Romans 8,11)

On the Last Day, God will raise us and all who believe in Christ from the dead. Thus, we need not fear Judgment day, for on this day God will fulfill His last promise:

Whoever calls upon the name of the LORD
Shall be saved.

Therefore you can be certain that God's Promise of the Holy Spirit has been fulfilled, is fulfilled continually, and will be perfectly fulfilled on the Last Day. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

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