



ST. MICHAEL'S SERMONS

Greenville, SC

Pentecost - B – June 4, 2006

Acts 2:1-21 & Ezekial 37:1-14

“O DAY FULL OF GRACE”

The Holy Spirit Happens!

Today – this Pentecost Day – the Holy Spirit of the Living God – the Wind of God's Holiness – happens! And because the Holy Spirit of the Living God happens TODAY, every day is a potential Pentecost! Each and every day, each and every occasion, each and every relationship is a potential place of the Spirit's pervasive, percolating power pushing us beyond ourselves – making it possible for us to become what God has made us to be!

The Holy Spirit Happens! And there is, according to Luke's account in the Book of Acts, the miracle; the result of the miracle; and the meaning of the miracle.

There is the miracle! If you had been there, it would have captivated you, fascinated you and frightened you, definitely gotten your attention. The sudden sound – like opening the door on a new year's party – a violent wind, rushing from heaven, filling the whole house, filling the house with fire, fire which fills each one there – divided tongues of fire, a tongue resting on each of them. Perhaps it has captivated you, fascinated you and frightened you, here – already definitely gotten your attention.

It is always a miracle – miraculous, magnificent, mysterious – when the Holy Spirit of the Living God, the Wind of God's Holiness, comes upon **us**! Because it is a holy happening, uncontrollable by us, under the complete control of God. The landscape of our world this Pentecost, 2006, shows the chaos and confusion which come from our own efforts to control everything The great Tower of Babel remains a reality for us. Ezekial's valley of dry bones still exists for us – it is the reality of “reality TV” – interesting and even morbidly fascinating, but there is no life there. And the landscape within our selves sometimes bears a remarkable resemblance.

There is the miracle. Then there is the RESULT of the miracle! “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability!” And at this sound a great crowd gathers, devout Jews from every nation, and the worldly world all mixed in together. Amazed and astonished, they ask “How is it that we hear?” All these speaking are Galileans! “Yet in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power!”

Everyone Understands! The result of the miracle is that everyone understands! We like to focus on unknown tongues, because there are so many we do not know. But the point of the story is that everyone understands. The tongues in this story are known and understood by those who hear! One reason we work so hard to get just a few readers to read just a few verses in just a few different languages is so that we can sense in some small way the bigness of the task, the magnificence of the miracle, the pervasive, percolating power of God's Spirit making it possible for everyone to understand. And so that we can again briefly hear what happens when Babel burns in the tongues of fire, and we ourselves can understand again.

The result of the miracle is that everyone understands! And what they understand is the mighty acts of God. This is not simply the resolution of a "lovers' quarrel" or a family squabble But Christian lovers and Christian families understand that one of God's mightiest acts is when everyone understands *in the church in our own house* That, too, is one of the gifts which flows from the gift this day of the Wind of God's Holiness.

There is the miracle. There is the result of the miracle. And there is the MEANING of the miracle! The world believes they are all drunk – drunk with new wine; drunk with their own self-importance; drunk with the spirit of insanity; simply out of touch with reality

But Peter proclaims that this is God's Own Power, given for God's Own Purpose! "Let this be known to you! Listen to what I say! These are not drunk, as you suppose This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out My Spirit, and they shall prophesy!'"

Peter anchors the miracle and the result of the miracle in the past, in God's Own personal and perfect plan of salvation – to recreate creation to become what God originally intended. And Peter anchors the miracle and the result of the miracle in the future – in that new creation in which God's Own dream and God's Own vision have become reality in one holy community – one holy communion – in which everyone – young and old, women and men, slave and free – everyone understands. Peter proclaims that this "day full of grace" joins God's past and God's future in God's Holy Spirit active and alive and working in us! "*O day full of grace that now we see appearing on earth's horizon, bring light from our God that we may be replete in His joy this season. God, shine for us now in this dark place; Your Name on our hearts emblazon*" (LBW 161:1).

It is instructive that the Apostles' Creed, in speaking of God the Father, goes on to describe what that looks like; and, in speaking of God the Son, goes on to tell the story of Jesus' life and death and resurrection – but, in speaking of God the Holy Spirit, says nothing more about the Holy Spirit, but rather goes on to speak of the Church. Now, the Holy Spirit of the Living God is in no way limited to the Church – that is the point of this Pentecost story. But the Church is the arena of the Spirit – the primary place where you and I are able to see God's past and God's future joined together through God's Holy Spirit at work in and through us! Indeed, this Wind of God's Holiness gives us strength and hope and comfort as this congregation and every congregation struggles to understand what it means to be the Church well-into the 21st century, struggles to speak the Gospel in languages understandable by a world which seems to be changing faster than we are able to keep up. And so we are always praying the prayer we sang at the beginning of worship today: "*Anoint and cheer our soil-ed face with the abundance of Thy grace!*"

The Holy Spirit happens! Because the Holy Spirit happens today, we know the Holy Spirit happens each and every day. May we become more and more open to what this Holy Spirit of the Living God, the Wind of God's Holiness, is working to do here in this place, among us!

AMEN