

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.” Well, this sermon writes itself! It is good to be here in the flesh. On this day that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and gave birth to the Church, we can celebrate the re-opening of our churches, albeit with safety precautions in place and social distancing enacted.

The Festival of Pentecost is a showcase for the work of the Holy Spirit. And on Pentecost we see that **THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLS, GATHERS, AND ENLIGHTENS HIS CHURCH.**

First, I. The Holy Spirit called the disciples from hiding and gathered them to enlighten others. The disciples were not always the bold apostles that you see in today’s reading from the book of Acts. Remember back in April, we read from John 20 wherein the disciples were locked in the upper room for fear of those who might persecute them.

What we as Christians consider to be the high point of the story of salvation: Jesus being arrested, Jesus being put on trial, Jesus being crucified, died, and buried. This time at which the Lord was working His mighty deeds of salvation was the time the disciples were at their lowest. Many fled. Judas betrayed Jesus. Peter denied Jesus. Even after the resurrection, they didn’t have it all together. Matthew records, **“And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.”** Even after witnessing the resurrection there was doubt. That’s certainly something to share with those who tell you, “If only I could have seen Jesus raised from the dead, I would believe.”

What made the difference? The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens His Church. **“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.”**

The Holy Spirit used an existing Jewish festival to change the lives of those who were already in Jerusalem for that special occasion. The Feast of Weeks, also known as the festival of Pentecost, happened seven weeks after the Passover. It was not unusual for Jews all throughout the Mediterranean to gather in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit used this holy convocation to make His voice heard.

The Holy Spirit transformed the scared disciples into the bold, winsome apostles who would go on even to give their lives for their savior. Once fleeing persecution, they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to stop at nothing to share the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit didn’t empower them to roll on the floor and speak in unintelligible languages. The Holy Spirit didn’t empower them to do magic tricks. The Holy Spirit empowered them to share with others the life changing news of the Gospel in their own tongues.

This is Good news that changed people. The text goes on to say that over 3,000 souls were baptized that day at Pentecost, and history tells us that the Good News of Jesus dying and rising again for forgiveness, life, and salvation spread like wildfire throughout the world. The Holy Spirit called together others beyond just those that were called together at Pentecost.

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.” II. The Holy Spirit calls us from hiding and gathers us to enlighten. And so too we are gathered here today on Pentecost. What a day to celebrate! But for a time, we were maybe not in hiding, but in quarantine. Our doors weren’t locked for fear of our enemies, but we were staying at home to curb the spread of coronavirus. Certainly, many of us may be filled with anxiety, stress, and fear, but staying at home isn’t an act of cowardice.

Yet maybe in these times we have had some real lows. Disappointments of plans cancelled. Fear from livelihoods in jeopardy. Loneliness as we miss our loved ones and want to hang out with our friends. Anxiety as we don’t know when this will end. In these troughs in our lives, it might look and feel as though all is lost.

Yet here we are today. What made the difference? The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens His Church. And on this Pentecost day, we know that the Holy Spirit is working powerfully through the means of grace to continue to call, gather, and enlighten us into His Holy Church. The fact that we’re gathered here today is a testament to the Church’s confession that in-person worship matters. That even though there is risk in gathering, even socially distanced, that the risk is worth the reward of the comfort, peace, and hope that God’s Word and Sacrament gives us.

There may not be tongues of fire over our heads. We may not be speaking in other languages. The Holy Spirit is like the wind, you can’t see Him, but you can see His signs. Earlier in the week a storm rolled through town, and when I came home, I discovered my trash bin was on its side. I guess a bear or an angry neighbor could have done it, but it most likely was the wind. I didn’t see it happen, I could only guess. Often, that’s how the Holy Spirit works.

The Holy Spirit has been working in your life. Often not with a bang or a miraculous sign, but slowly and surely He has been calling you through His Word. He has been speaking in a language you understand. He has been calling you to the Gospel truth that Jesus Christ is bigger than COVID-19. Jesus Christ is stronger than your weaknesses, Jesus and has the ability to take your failures and reshape them into victories. That is the Gospel, and that is the message of the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit is like the wind, you can’t see Him, but you can see His signs. This weekend we celebrate the reception of two new members, one by transfer from another LCMS church, and another by adult confirmation. We can

look at these signs and be thankful that the Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, and enlighten us as His Church on Earth.

So whether it be back at the first Pentecost, or at the one we're experiencing today, we see that the Holy Spirit acts mightily to spread the Word about Jesus, and to bring new believers into the fold of the Church.

Yet The fact that we're gathered here today is by no means a "Mission accomplished" banner over coronavirus, and there may be months ahead of uncertainty and shifting plans as the battle continues.

"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place." We're gathered, but not in the exact same way that we did before the pandemic. We've increased the number of services and spaced out seating. We've changed a few of the ways that we've done things, and no, across the three services, and online, we're not all together in one place.

However, our Christian hope and trust is that III. The Holy Spirit will call His Church from hiding and gather Her as the enlightened. The fallen world in which we live means that the Church is always partially in hiding. It was in hiding just as the disciples were in hiding, just as some of us are quarantined at home. Even in a world which has healed from COVID-19, the church is partially hidden.

With our own two eyes we don't see our loved ones who have died in the faith. We don't see our brothers and sisters in Christ who join us in worship in places like South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. We don't see Peter and the eleven apostles. Yet they're there. They're just in hiding.

The Church is all believers throughout all time and space joined together by the Holy Spirit to worship and serve their Savior. And often we can see glimpses of it like today, but this side of heaven we never get the full "all together in one place" vision that is promised to us. Somebody always seems to be missing.

Romans 8:11 **"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 dwells in you."** The Holy Spirit who dwelt in the apostles at Pentecost as tongue of fire also dwells in you, and He will call you from your grave, gather you all as His church, and we will be enlightened even as we live in the light of Jesus Christ our Savior.

The great day of Pentecost is yet to come wherein the prophecy will be made more certain: **"And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."** Wherever you're listening from today, take comfort, and believe in Jesus call upon His name, even as the Holy Spirit is continuing to call, gather, and enlighten His Church for the eternal Pentecost.