Holy Spirit, Welcome!

05/31/20
Y. Joe Kim

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one
place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a
violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided
tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of
them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other
languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. 5 Now there were devout Jews from
every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd
gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the
native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all
these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in
our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of
Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and
Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors
from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own
languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12 All were
amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But
others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." (Acts 2:1-13)

1. The Power of a Baby

Since our grandson, Caleb, was born, the lifestyle of our family has changed. My son, his wife, and Christine take care of Caleb whenever he needs it. When we FaceTime with our grandson, I stop whatever I am doing to pay attention to him, taking lots of photos and videos. Christine says that Caleb is the king of our family.

Caleb has a power that no one else in power has. His arrival has made a huge difference in our family. In today's scripture, we find one of the most significant events in human history.

2. The Power of Pentecost

Today is a very important day for Christians. Do you know what day today is? Many Christians know Easter and Christmas. However, fewer Christians know what today is. Today is Pentecost Sunday.

I believe that Pentecost is the most important day for Christians. Let us take a look at Acts Chapter Two to see why the day of Pentecost is so important to every human being in the world.

Acts 2:1-2 says, "***When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting****."*

Today's scripture tells us what happened on the day of Pentecost about 2,000 years ago. The term "Pentecost" in Greek means 50. It was the 50th day after Passover and Easter Sunday.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples. The disciples heard a roaring sound like a strong driving wind. Flames like fiery tongues hovered above their heads, and the disciples proclaimed God's wonderful works in languages they had never learned. Since that day, the Holy Spirit has been transforming lives through the witness of the followers of Jesus Christ.

If the Holy Spirit had never come on the day of Pentecost, the disciples would have gone home after their prayer meeting was over. After the death of the disciples, no one would remember who Jesus was. There would be no more followers of Jesus. There would be no church today.

Christmas and Easter remind us of the birth and resurrection of Jesus. But without the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, there would be no Christians and no Christianity today. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit has changed the world and our lives.

3. The Purpose of the Coming of the Holy Spirit

What is the purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit? If you remember what Jesus says in Acts 1:8, you would say that the Holy Spirit has come to empower the disciples to be witnesses for Jesus. That would be a right answer. However, I would like to call your attention to what Jesus says to his disciples in the Gospel of John chapter 14. Jesus says, "***I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever***" (verse 16). The Holy Spirit was sent to be with God's people forever.

The disciples thought that Jesus would always be with them. The disciples never thought that Jesus might one day leave. When Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, Jesus said to his disciples, "***I am with you always, to the end of the age***" (Matthew 28:20).

The disciples felt the presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit was poured out on them and all the fears and anxieties that the disciples had were gone. That is how Peter and other disciples stood and began to preach in Acts 2:14 and the following.

What does the Holy Spirit do when the Spirit is with God's people? In John 14:16, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "another Advocate." The term "advocate" in the Greek language is "*paracletos*," which means "called to be one's aid." The term "advocate" means a "helper, comforter, and counselor." The Holy Spirit helps, comforts and counsels us. Isn't it true that everyone needs help, comfort and counsel these days?

How did the Holy Spirit help the disciples? The Holy Spirit helped Peter and other disciples to be able to understand God's promises in the Old

Testament. When the disciples spoke in other languages, some people sneered saying, "***they are filled with new wine***." People made fun of the disciples. But Peter stood with other disciples and said***, "Indeed, these are not drunk...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, and your old men shall dream dreams***" (Acts 2:15-17). Peter tells the people that God's prophecy in Joel was fulfilled.

When we listen to what Peter says here, we are amazed by his boldness and his passionate sermon. We see here a very different Peter. Peter's interpretation of the Old Testament and his powerful sermon was possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon him, Peter began to understand God's plans for the world and preached God's message with confidence. Luke tells us that through Peter's sermon, three thousand people came to believe in Jesus (Acts 2:41). Without the coming of the Holy Spirit, this transformation would not have happened.

4. The Birth of the Church

The Holy Spirit continued to work among the followers of Jesus. Acts 2:42 and the following tells us what had happened among the believers. These new believers were united with the other believers, were taught by the apostles, and were included in the prayer meetings and fellowship. This was the beginning of the community of faith. On the day of Pentecost, the Jesus movement got started. The day of Pentecost gave birth to the church, so that the believers would grow in faith and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, not only in Israel, but also in the lands of the Gentiles.

If someone asked you, "what is church?," how would you respond? When we hear the word "church," we probably think of a church building. But when we read the Acts of the Apostles, we notice that a church is much more than a building. The earliest Christians had no church buildings. The term church in Greek means "the ones who are called" to be part of the body of Christ. The church is where the people in the community of faith experience the presence and the love of Jesus through other believers.

5. Racial Tensions

For two months, our focus has been in large part about COVID-19. This week, racial tensions have become a focal point in the U.S. The hatred, anger, and frustration are exploding in many cities. Throughout the Jewish history, discrimination, hatred, and tension between the Jews and the Gentiles were always serious issues. Yet the earliest Christians pursued reconciliation between the two by the power of Christ's love and the Holy Spirit. In Colossians 3:11-12, Paul says, "***there is no longer Greek and***

Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! 12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience."

Why do you think the earliest church tried to eliminate the barriers, prejudice, discrimination, and hatred among the believers? It is because the early Christians knew that Jesus loved and accepted all who would come to him. How do we break barriers, love one another, and bring peace in our society? We need to acknowledge that every human being is created in the image of God. We need to repent for our hatred and cruelty and forgive those who have created racial tensions. And we need to be filled with the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in order to live together in harmony. Everyone should learn that we need one another.

6. Conclusion

Today's scripture tells us that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit turned the world upside down. The Spirit took away the fears of the disciples and gave them the courage to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. Why do you think the disciples proclaimed the wonders of God in languages that they had never learned? They could do other miracles such as healing the sick. It is because God wants us to know that God loves each one of us. Everyone is precious to the Lord. God wants everyone to be happy.

We need to remember that the same Spirit that worked so dramatically at the day of Pentecost works today in our lives.

7. Application

How can we apply what we have learned from Acts chapter two? In Peter's sermon in Acts 2:17 and the following, he says, "***In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams***." What is Peter talking about? He is saying that by outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God reminds us that He has given us a mission. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, we realize what our mission is and would do our best to fulfill the mission.

When George Floyd said to the police, "I can't breathe," it sounds to me, "I have not accomplished my mission yet." "Let me do my mission before I see the Lord." Many would blame the four police, but we need to ask ourselves whether we see others as God's precious children who have come to do God's mission. God sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper and comforter and counselor. Would you welcome the Holy Spirit and accomplish God's mission with the help of the Holy Spirit? Amen.