

Look at the sights of Pentecost Day: You'll see the Holy Spirit, visible upon the heads of the apostles in burning fire; you'll see a former fisherman preaching a powerful sermon about Jesus; you'll see thousands of people with baptismal water on their heads, having received the Holy Spirit's gift.

Listen to the sounds of Pentecost Day: You'll hear a mighty, rushing wind; you'll hear a message about Jesus' mission, spoken in different languages; whatever language you need to understand.

Listen to those words of the apostles, as they speak about the Son and the Father under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He - the Father, the Son, and the Spirit – is more than able to set fire to the human heart. He is the One who spoke to Moses from the bush that burned. He is the God called upon by the Prophet Elijah to bring down fire from heaven. It is He who created, who has purchased, and who now refines His people. For this purpose, Jesus suffered to the uttermost until He died and was buried. But He is alive, risen out of that grave victorious, His mission complete. He has ascended in glory to the right hand of the Father. He and His Father send this Holy Fire upon the world.

And in this way, the Christian Church is born by the Word. Not by marketing schemes, but by the message, the Spirit-driven message. That message changes lives. It draws people out of death and gives them life. It draws people out of darkness into light. It draws people out of chaos into order. It draws people out of the garbage dump and into place of cleanliness. It makes us who we were always meant to be: the crowning point of God's creation, the focus of His love. It's the Spirit-driven message about Jesus that does it; real talk about the profound problem of sin and the sacrificial solution provided by the Savior. The Christian Church is born by the Word, which is to say that Christians are born by the Word. Christ followers are born by the Word, and along with the Word always comes the Holy Fire of the Spirit. Always.

This Word created all things. “Let there be...” God said, and there was. This Word separated the waters of the Red Sea. This Word knocked down the walls of Jericho. This same Word became a man and lived a life of

perfect integrity in order to recreate us. This Word, born of Mary, is the Truth. He calls us to new birth. This Word has accomplished what He was sent to do. After all, here we are. The Word and Spirit have given birth to Christians, to you and me, not to mention our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

Pentecost is the beginning of the end. It is the beginning of the end of division. It kick-starts the undoing of the curse of Babel, the reuniting of people divided by ethnicity, culture, economics, and language; uniting them in Christ. The Holy Spirit gives birth to the common ground of faith in Jesus. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did not make differences between people disappear; but He gave a gift that transcends human differences; the gift of faith. This means I can look at a person from a completely different background than me as a person for whom Jesus died; and if I push this all the way through, it means that person is my brother or sister, because we have the same Father. It's no wonder that this faith has been regarded as dangerous down through the ages; so much worldly power depends on keeping people separate, and keeping people fighting, and this faith in Jesus threatens to undermine all that. Spirit-filled, real-deal Christianity has always crossed borders and brought people together, and the truth is, it still does.

You want to know a secret? Pentecost never really stopped. What I mean is, the Christian Church keeps being re-born by the Word and Spirit in every generation. God keeps making a people for Himself. He keeps forging people in the purifying fire of forgiveness and cleansing us with the blood of Jesus. The Spirit keeps calling to you with His Gospel: He keeps calling to you with the story of the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus, all done for you, and He wants you to explore the dimensions of what that great news means for you, personally. He has gathered us around this great news. He has enlightened you with His Word. He named you in Baptism with His own Name. He has adopted you to be His child. He will not let you go. The same is true for the people sitting next to you, in front of you, behind you. You see what that means, right? We have the same Father. We have the same Brother and Savior. We have the same gifts, delivered by the Holy Spirit. There are things that make us different, and distinct from one another, but we do not need to be divided. God's vision for his Church—Jesus prayer for his followers, is that we be one. The

Holy Spirit, the Fire of God, creates this burning desire for deep fellowship among his people.

Pentecost isn't over. Even though you may not experience a rushing wind or tongues of fire or fluency in unlearned languages, you have His Word. You have the Great News of the wonderful works of God for you in your own language. You have the Spirit who came to you in Word and water, delivering God's gifts to you. You have Jesus presiding and hosting today at His Table, nourishing you. You have the Bread from Heaven and the Blood of the Lamb who was slain but who lives, who ascended but who is here. It is for the complete cancellation of your sins. It is to give you a new identity; a status in which you can live that is always true.

Now, the time will come when all things written will be fulfilled and Pentecost will be over. We will live in our Father's house where one group of no-longer waiting people will employ one language in praise of the Almighty. Our friend, the apostle John, caught a glimpse of that, and he wrote in Revelation 7, "...I looked, and there was a great number of people, so many that no one could count them. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language of the earth. They were all standing before the throne and before the Lamb...and they were shouting in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (vv. 9—10, NCV) That's where this entire story is headed. But for now, we wait, we live in these Pentecost days, and while we wait, we get to participate in the Pentecost mission.

And you know what? The tools for this mission are the same tools the apostles had: the truth about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. That's it. Same tools. All we need is the willingness to pick those tools up and use them—and that is an encouraging thought.