

The city was crowded. Pilgrims from every nation under heaven had come to Jerusalem for the feast. But no one was prepared for what happened that morning.

It came without warning, like a freight train roaring through the alleys of the city. A sound like a mighty rushing wind filled the house where the disciples were staying. Flames appeared and rested on each of them. And then the noise really began: voices, a dozen of them, shouting out the mighty works of God. Each one in a different language, yet every listener understanding in his own native tongue.

Imagine it: the roar of the wind, the crackling of fire, the echo of voices bouncing off stone walls and narrow streets. A crowd gathers, bewildered, amazed, skeptical. Some are wide-eyed in awe. Others laugh and scoff: “They’re just drunk.” But no one can ignore it. Something supernatural is happening.

And this is Peter’s moment. He could point to the fire. He could boast of the wind. He could dazzle them with the miracle. But he doesn’t. Instead, he raises his voice, quiets the crowd, and opens the Scriptures. He doesn’t say, “Look what we can do!” No, he points to Jesus.

He says, “*this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified.*” He says, “*This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.*” He says, “*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*”

It's fitting that the Day of Pentecost begins not with a dramatic miracle, but with a clear Word from the Lord: “*Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem... listen.*” Yes, fire and wind and speech in many tongues drew the crowd. But Peter didn't speak about fire or wind or personal experience.

He spoke about Jesus. That is the miracle of Pentecost: not only that the Spirit came down with power, but that the Spirit pointed up to Christ crucified and risen. For the Spirit does not draw attention to Himself, but bears witness to the Son of God.

And so on this Pentecost day, we pause and ask: what is the Spirit’s work? What does He do in the Church? And how do we recognize His presence?

Jesus gives us the answer in John 14: “*The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*” The Spirit is not a free agent. He does not come to blaze His own trail.

According to Jesus, he doesn't even come in His own name. He comes in Jesus' name. He comes to bring Christ’s words to remembrance. He comes to teach Christ’s doctrine. He comes to apply Christ’s work, His cross, His death, His resurrection, to you.

As Martin Luther once put it, the Holy Spirit is the great preacher. He preaches the work and words of Christ to us. This is the true Pentecost miracle: the Holy Spirit gives you Jesus. And wherever the Spirit is at work, you will always find the Word of Christ at the center.

But this isn't what many today expect from the Holy Spirit. In fact, many Christians look for the Spirit in all the wrong places.

Some look for Him in ecstatic worship experiences. When the music swells, the lights dim, the body shakes, and the emotions boil over, they say, “The Spirit is here.” But is He? Not if the Word isn't. Not if Christ is not preached. Not if sin and grace and cross and resurrection are missing. The Spirit is not a feeling in the gut or a chill down the spine. He is the One who teaches and reminds us of all that Christ has said.

Others look for the Spirit in speaking in tongues. “Unless you’ve had the experience,” they say, “you don’t have the Spirit.” But this contradicts Scripture. In Acts 2, yes, the disciples speak in various languages. But why? So that each listener hears in his own language the mighty works of God.

Tongues are a means to proclaim Christ, not a private badge of spirituality. In fact, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14 that he would rather speak five intelligible words with his mind than ten thousand in a tongue. Why? Because the Spirit works through understanding, not confusion.

Still others claim the Spirit gave them visions of the afterlife, glimpses of heaven, or private revelations. Books and movies abound with such claims. But what does scripture actually say? *"[The Holy Spirit] will glorify Me,"* Jesus says in John 16, *"for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you."*

The Holy Spirit does not point us to someone's experience of heaven. He points us to Christ, who has already come down from heaven to die for us, and who will come again in glory to raise us from the dead. No vision can add to this. And if a vision distracts from Christ, it is not of the Spirit. It's of the flesh... or worse.

These ecstatic experiences, these signs and wonders, may seem impressive. They may stir the heart. But if they don't point to Christ, they're at best meaningless, and at worst, quite deceptive. Another lie from the father of lies. The devil is quite happy to have you fixate on feelings or visions or tongues, just so long as you forget the cross and empty tomb.

The Spirit's work is more humble and more powerful. He works through preaching. Through baptism. Through bread and wine. Through the Word. These may not dazzle the eyes or stir the heart, but they deliver what they promise. Because through these means, the Spirit gives you Jesus.

That's what Peter proclaimed at Pentecost. The Spirit was poured out. And Peter didn't say, "Come and feel the fire." He didn't say, "Come and see the signs." He said, *"Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

The gift of the Spirit is not merely an emotional high. It is the forgiveness of sins. It is the promise of life in Christ. It is the Spirit taking what belongs to Jesus and giving it to you.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you."* The world's peace is fleeting. The world's peace depends on how you feel or what you experience. But Christ gives a better peace. A peace that rests on the cross. A peace that flows from the wounds of the risen Lord. A peace the Spirit brings to you in the Gospel, again and again.

So if you want to see the Holy Spirit, look to Christ. Look to His Word. Look to your baptism, where the Spirit made you a child of God. Look to the preaching of the Gospel, where the Spirit convicts, comforts, and renews. Look to the Lord's Supper, where the Spirit strengthens faith through the true body and blood of Christ. There is the Spirit, doing what He has always done: giving you Jesus.

And He will keep on doing it. The Spirit will keep preaching Christ to your ears. He will keep bringing Christ's body and blood to your mouth. He will keep speaking Christ's Word of peace to your troubled heart.

At the end of our reading today, Peter makes a promise to the crowd: *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* That promise isn't just for someday. It's a present reality. To call on Jesus is to receive His mercy now. To call on Jesus is to be forgiven now. To call on Jesus is to be justified, to be cleansed, to be made whole now.

When you were baptized, you called on His name. And He saved you. When you confess your sins, you call on His name. And He absolves you. When you kneel at the altar, you call on His name. And He feeds you with forgiveness, life, and salvation. And when you cry out in prayer, "Lord, have mercy," you call on His name. And He answers you.

This is what Pentecost means. The Spirit was poured out not just once, long ago, but continually, through the Word. And through that Word, the risen Christ is present to save. He is present to save today, tomorrow, and forever. Because this Jesus died for you. Amen.