

The Spirited Church (Day of Pentecost)

Kenneth Korby

Acts 2:1–21

The Spirited Church

What Kind of Response?

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, my dear brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, what kind of a response do you think we would have if what happened here today was like what happened when these faithful are gathered together preaching the promises of Jesus and praying for the Holy Spirit to come? Suddenly, the whole place would rock with a roaring wind, fire would break out over the place, and it would divide itself and come to rest on the head of the apostles, and they wouldn't get burned from it, and everybody would start preaching, and everybody, whatever language you had, would hear the preaching in that language. I think we would probably be startled out of our boots, or maybe we would just be curious, and like the crowd, bitterly disappointed. Two youngsters will be born again today by water and the Spirit right before our eyes. We won't be able to see any razzle—dazzle, period, burning from the sky, but the Word will tell us what we see. And we will pray for the Holy Spirit on our catechumens and confessors. What we will see with our eyes and senses will be what we hear with our ears and believe in our hearts.

The Grand Reversal

Now, in appearances then, this day is nothing like the amazing fireworks of that first Pentecost. That roaring wind, those burning fires over the apostles' heads, nobody getting scorched, preacher preaching in languages they'd never studied, and the people who knew those languages as their native tongue could understand them, it seems that God pulled together all the promises He made from the beginning of the world about the coming of Christ and of His Spirit. And now he puts on an exhibit of the grand reversal. For in the death of Jesus, God worked the reversal. He broke the back of sin and condemnation and hell. He broke his back and turned us around for life. And in his resurrection from the dead, he made our future to be joy and peace and glory, not damnation, wrath, anger, and loneliness. And now

God, as it were, puts this all together in a windy, firing display in the lives of the people and before the face of the people in Jerusalem. With such a big noise that it didn't bother only that room, they began to come from all over the city and gather around to see what was happening there.

The Curse of Babel

Now this is the grand reversal, I said, because you remember there was a time at Babel when proud human beings, skilled in architecture and in construction, they could build like we do, skilled in business and making money. They were full of fear. They were full of fear that they would be forgotten, and they were full of fear that they would be scattered. Something would disrupt them. And in their pride, they said, we will build a building that will go up and stick its finger right under the nose of God, and we will be remembered.

For this pride, for this fear, and for this mistrust of God, they suffered the great crushing blow of the confusion of languages. Disintegration happened. One man would say, give me the trowel. Another one would stick his knife in the hand of the man who asked, and they would start fighting; couldn't understand each other. And angry with each other, they soon were scattered.

We don't want to live around people like that. Get out and get out away from there.

So today we still know this terrible curse, the breakdown of what we call communication. It goes on in marriages, it goes on in families, it goes on at work, it goes on in the city, it goes on among the nations, war, blood, smoke, fumes, and darkness.

One Holy People

And now there is the grand reversal of the curse of Babel. For this startling exhibit, God shows that the gospel of salvation goes to all the nations, all languages, all people, all races, young and old, men and women, Greeks and Gentiles and Jews, whether you're religious or not religious, that language is preached to every people, the language of God's divine suffering for the rescue of us sins. And God is building a new humanity. It won't look like Jew or Gentile or male or female. It's a new humanity called holy church.

Look at you. Some are old, some are young, some are children, some are adults, some are black, some are white, some are halfway between, some are smart, some are dumb, some are wealthy,

some don't have much at all. And here we are gathered together one holy people. And we are part of a company.

This morning Mark told me his grandmother, [unclear], for whom we have been praying, has died, and [unclear]. But she is in that company that will stay with us, with angels, and archangels, and the whole company of heaven, we, Lord, we, in this place, Lord, and magnify your glorious name. For this holy church she has begun from the beginning of time, when blessed old Eve believed that what she had done was undone by the man—child to come, and dear old brutalized Adam believed that the curse on the ground would not rule him forever, but that the blessedness of the man who rose out of the ground from the dead was his life. From then on, down to this time when today children are born again by water and spirit, And confessors will make the name of Jesus, their name, before heaven and earth. Down to this day holy church is gathered together, the reversal of the curse of Babel. What joy for you and for me to see today before our eyes, in the midst of a world of chaos and disorder, of confusion, of tongue, every man can for himself, and if possible, do the other guy in, that we should witness before our eyes the growth of the word of God and the increase of his holy church this day.

One dies, the church has grown, a confessor has died. Another is born, the church grows, a confessor, a new birth is given.

Pentecost Is About Loving Jesus

Well, but the dazzling display of Pentecost is the exhibit, the expression. The heart of the matter lies in Jesus' words today in the Gospel. For Pentecost and the gift of the Spirit is not razzle—dazzle.

There are many who talk about the gift of the Spirit. One that they want very much is that they can talk a language which nobody understands. They call it speaking in the tongue. If there's no interpreter, even the speaker doesn't know what he said. Now, there are people who do that. But that is not to be thought of as Pentecost. Pentecost is something different.

The gift of the spirit in Pentecost is that the gospel of God could be preached so that the native dweller of a land would hear in his own tongue about Christ. Because Pentecost is not about the razzle—dazzle, talking in languages that nobody knows, or being able to levitate, or being able to tell people, throw all your crutches away. Pentecost is about the heart loving Jesus. If you love me, hold on to my word. Pentecost is about hearts being set on fire, to love that Lord Jesus. That is, to be loved by him and to cling to him.

When you love someone, you want to be close to them, you want to hang on to them. You want them to be what they are, to love him with mind and heart. And he says, love me, you will keep my word. Listen to what I say.

The day of Pentecost, when all the curious crowds out there, they were rather disappointed. [unclear] is always going on. All this fuss, just so we can hear some preacher preach, and you know what the preacher preached? You were very cruel and very wicked because you killed the Son of God. You mean we have to go across town to listen to some preacher box our ears over how wicked we are? Not on your life. They must be all drunk.

Now that was one way you can respond to the words of Jesus. That's not the church. That's not the church's way. That is the church of the devil, but that's not the church itself. The church holds on to His word.

And so Pentecost is about being loved. My father will love you. You hold on to love me and hold on to my word. My father will love you.

The Spirit Teaches Us of Jesus

For you see, Pentecost is about the Holy Spirit teaching you about Jesus. He will teach you. And He will call to your remembrance everything that I have preached to you. Pentecost is that Holy Spirit working, [unclear] your heart and mind.

You remember that Christ is your giant. He is your David that kills your Goliath. He is your Lamb that carries your sins. He is your bread that feeds your soul. He is your purity and chastity before God, but you don't have any of your own. To remember Him as we do when we eat and drink. We remember, we preach to each other, live on him, trust him, he is your life, and the Holy Spirit will teach you.

So the Church of the Spirit is the Church that craves to learn. It is an arrogant spirit that says, I know all of that. I mean, I was confirmed 18 years ago. I know all of that. It is an arrogant spirit that says, oh, same old stuff. It is a contention and a contention spirit that says, ah, all he does is preach anyway.

We are all the way across town, this big wind going, we see all this fire dancing, and what do we hear? Preaching! And what did he say? Let me tell you about what happened with the death of Jesus. You met the destroyer. God knows what they do.

So Pentecost, then, is about the Holy Spirit teaching our heart. And the spirit of the church is the spirit of humility, compassion, of supplication, prayer, teaching. Teach us how to pray. Teach us how to trust Jesus. Teach us how to love one another. Teach us how to take care of our world and our work. Teach us.

Courage in a Fearful Humanity

But it is a fearful thing to live like that. That's why Jesus had to say, Let not your heart be frightened. Don't be afraid. Because Pentecost is about courage. The courage of the Holy Spirit as you live in a fearful humanity.

Who's going to remember us? they worried at Babel and they brought their own [unclear] upon themselves. Who will take note of us? A spirit of fear is inhumanity and it is because of this. You must believe me, although you already know it, when people are afraid they are violent and we have violence multiplied until we will have no blood left in many of our youngsters, we will have very little money left in our pockets because we will be building jails and buying guns and keep on with the violence. How are we going to get it stopped?

The answer, let the church be courageous. Let her speak her word of peace. Let her pray for kings and governors and police officers. Let her pray for her family, pray for the children that are baptized and for the adults that are training them, because the neglect and the abuse of the children begins there at home with mama and daddy, if they've got enough of that. And so the church has a quiet courage in the midst of this fearful humanity that we live in.

And we can't act like it's all out there. The fear and the terror are in us too.

Peace in the Midst of Conflict

But he says, I'm going to give you a peace. And the courage is to trust what he says about peace.

Because when the world says peace, it means all your troubles go away. [unclear]. Be a Christian. Have no more trouble. You'll just live as if you were levitating perfection. And when troubles come, then that peace goes. That's the way the world gives peace.

He doesn't give it that way. He gives it with a word in your ear. And the Spirit teaches your heart [unclear], courage. That this peace exists in the middle of the conflict. It doesn't wait for the conflict to be gone, because the conflict is gone. He is the one who fought the battle and

won the victory. And our conflict in him is the presence of that victory he trusted and lived on.

The Church That Loves His Word

Who is the church's name? She is this new holy people, little boys and little girls baptized believer, old men and old women, believing baptized and [unclear]. They love Jesus. They love to hear His love for them. They say, preacher, preach. We don't want you to excite us, entertain us, tickle us, or roll us on our ears. Just tell us about Him. Preach to us. For in His love, our love is in flames. And we say, do that for us.

Come, Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful people. Kindle in them the fire of your love. Hallelujah.

What is that love? Love Jesus is to keep His word, hope, cherish, learn it, teach it. They are the beloved of the Father, and we will come and make our home in Him.

The peace of the Lord be with all of you.

SOURCE

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