

## Acts 2:1-21

Although the hymn which we just sang doesn't have its roots in the Lutheran Reformation, nevertheless, it is a **fitting** hymn for the Day of **Pentecost** which we are celebrating today. In fact it is **so** fitting, that I have actually chosen its **title** to be the **theme** for today's sermon: **I Love To Tell The Story**. The entire Book of Acts is a **story** book - that is, a book which tells us the **story** of the amazing growth of the early Christian Church - growth which already began in dramatic fashion on the Day of **Pentecost** - a day which we recognize as the **birthday** of the New Testament Church. The second **chapter** of the Book of Acts which includes this morning's text, relates to us the **story** of the actual **events** which took place on the Day of Pentecost. Then also, it includes a portion of Peter's Pentecost **sermon** - a sermon which resulted in over 3,000 baptisms that very same day - a sermon which tells the **story** of the **promises** which God had made in the Old Testament - promises which were being **fulfilled** on the Day of Pentecost.

The people who were involved in this **story** were the **followers** of Jesus - at this point, a group of about 120 individuals. They had gathered in Jerusalem to wait for Jesus to send the Counselor to them, as He had **promised** He would. While they were waiting, they cast lots to find a **12th** apostle - one to replace **Judas**, who had **hanged** himself in **despair**. The lot fell to a man named **Matthias**, so he was added to the other eleven apostles. That's where our text begins, *"When the Day of **Pentecost** came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a **sound** like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven, and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what **seemed to be** tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the **Holy Spirit**, and began to speak in other **tongues** as the Spirit enabled them."*

In a matter of moments, their **ears** heard a sound like that of a violent **wind**, their **eyes** saw what appeared to be flames of **fire**, and their **mouths** spoke in languages which were **foreign** to them. The **Holy Spirit** had literally taken over their **senses**. All of these things were **outward** manifestations that the Holy Spirit was **filling** them, for the **greater** purpose of sharing the message of **salvation** with people who had come from many different parts of the world, for our text **continues**, *"There were **staying** in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from **every nation** under heaven. When they heard this sound, a **crowd** came **together** in **bewilderment**, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked, 'Are not all these men who are speaking **Galileans**?"*

*Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and **converts** to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs - we hear them declaring the **wonders of God in our own tongues!**” That phrase **in our own tongues** was repeated **three times**. These were clearly **understandable** languages, **not** just gibberish. And that was really the **key** to what took place on the Day of Pentecost, for if the people didn’t have the ability to **understand** the words of the disciples, then they wouldn’t be able to learn about their **Savior**.*

Of course it was **Peter** who once again took the **lead** in this preaching. Very seldom do we find him being timid or reserved. Our text tells us, “*Peter **stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and addressed the crowd.***” Peter literally took his **stand**. As spokesman for the other eleven apostles, Peter spoke **loudly** and with great **authority** and **conviction**. He would no longer be found cowering behind locked doors as he **had** been immediately following Jesus’ crucifixion. Peter got right to the point. He didn’t beat around the bush, but rather he got up on his soap box in front of **thousands** of people, and **boldly** proclaimed the message of his Lord’s death and resurrection. No doubt Peter was having a rather **good time** too, for it is tremendously more enjoyable for a pastor to preach to a **full house**, than it is to preach to a mere **handful** of people.

Peter introduces his sermon this way, “*Fellow **Jews** and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen **carefully** to what I say. These men are not **drunk**, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the **morning.***” If the Holy Spirit had a message for **you** at 9:00 on Sunday morning, where would He typically **find** you - right here in **church**, at home in **bed**, or maybe slaving away at **work**? The people in our **text** appear to have been just wandering the **streets** - doing **nothing** in particular. However, they had gathered around the **disciples** to see what all the **commotion** was about. Once they **got** there, they realized that it wasn’t the **commotion** which was so **important**. Rather, it was the **message** which the disciples were **proclaiming** - the message of the **crucified** and **risen** Savior. And it was **happening** just as the Prophet **Joel** had **said** it would hundreds of years **earlier**.

Peter **quoted** these words from the Old Testament Book of Joel, “*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. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My **Spirit** in those*

*days, and they will prophesy.*” Under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, **everybody** would be talking about the **Savior** - each of course within his own sphere of **authority** - children to other **children**; women to other **women** and **children**; and men to other **men, women, and children**. The message of **salvation** must get **out**, and the Holy Spirit will see to it that differences in culture or language will **not** be a **barrier** to sharing the message.

Over the years I have seen a lot of **advertising** in local newspapers by congregations - usually of the Assembly of God or Pentecostal persuasion - which invites people to come and **experience** a great outpouring of the Holy **Spirit** in their worship services. I have **news** for them. There is a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit today **right here** in **our** congregation, as well as in all the **other** congregations where the Word of God is still taught and preached. However, in keeping with their particular church body, I **don't** think that's what **they** have in **mind**. Rather, I suspect that **they** are focusing more on the **commotion** which occurred on Pentecost, rather than on the **message** which was delivered. So **many** people **miss** the clear and simple point which **Jesus** made in these words which He spoke, *“The Spirit of Truth will testify about Me.”* Pentecost is not really **about** the Holy Spirit - it's about **Jesus**. Apart from that message of **salvation** there would have been **no purpose** for the disciples' hearing the sound like wind, or seeing the flames like fire, or speaking in foreign languages. After all, it wasn't **those** things which led the 3,000 people to be **baptized** on that Pentecost. It was the **Holy Spirit** working through the **message** which had been **preached** to them.

Later on in his sermon, Peter would go on to tell about the **miracles**, and **wonders**, and **signs** which Jesus had performed. The evidence that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior from sin was **overwhelming**. Who else could change water into wine; and give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and mobility to the lame? Who else had complete control over the forces of nature so that He could walk on water, and even command the wind and waves to obey Him? As the **story** of the **Savior** was told again and again, the Holy Spirit would be **actively working** through the **Word**, to lead people to **believe**.

This is the story which **Peter** was telling - the story which he **loved** to tell - the story of **Jesus** and His **glory**, of **Jesus** and His **love**. It is also the story which **we** are telling - the old, old story of **Jesus** and His **love**. And dear friends, the **story** is **true**. The message of the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through **Jesus** is one that **must** be shared both **near** and **far**. We have the **privilege** of sharing that message with others. May our attitude follow the **refrain** of the hymn

which was sung at the beginning of today's sermon, "*I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory to **tell** the old, old story of **Jesus and His love.***" After all, **we** have the story **straight**, and if we **don't** tell it to the people of this world, who **will**? Amen.