

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost and Confirmation Sunday  
May 19, 2024  
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl  
***Overflowing with the Holy Spirit***

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the rushing of a violent wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw divided tongues that were like fire resting on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, since the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak fluently.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were godly Jewish men from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> When this sound was heard, a crowd came together and was confused, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup> They were completely baffled and said to each other, “Look, are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?” <sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them speaking in his own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, and of Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya around Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring in our own languages the wonderful works of God.” <sup>12</sup> They were all amazed and perplexed. They kept saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup> But others mocked them and said, “They are full of new wine.”

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and spoke loudly and clearly to them: “Men of Judea, and all you residents of Jerusalem, understand this, and listen closely to my words. <sup>15</sup> These men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup> On the contrary, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> This is what God says will happen in the last days:

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions.

Your old men will dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

<sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the sky above,

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and a rising cloud of smoke.

<sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> And this will happen: Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord

will be saved.

—Acts 2:1-21

Come, Holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love. Amen.

It was a very exciting and baffling day 2,000 years ago. Luke, the Evangelist, shares those events by writing, “**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the rushing of a violent wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw divided tongues that were like fire resting on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, since the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak fluently.**”

Pentecost was an Old Testament celebration where God’s people gathered in Jerusalem to bring their harvest offerings to the Lord. And on that particular Pentecost celebration, the Lord had a different kind of harvest celebration in mind.

The disciples gathered in Jerusalem, just as Jesus told them to, and 50 days after Jesus’ resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon them with “**a sound like the rushing of a violent wind.**” The noise was heard by many in Jerusalem. They came to investigate and came to the house where Jesus’ followers had gathered. What they saw there was incredible. On top of each of the disciples’ heads flickered a flame. This was the visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit. And if that wasn’t enough, the disciples started to speak in languages they had never learned before. This enabled them to communicate with the non-Hebrew speaking pilgrims who had come to celebrate Pentecost. The disciples were *filled* with the Holy Spirit.

But this was not the first time the disciples had been filled with the Holy Spirit. As our confirmands know so well and have already shown on Thursday at their public examination, no one can confess faith in Jesus unless the Holy Spirit has worked in their hearts. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:3, “**No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy**

**Spirit.”** We confess that truth in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed. **“I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”**

You see, the Holy Spirit does more than just bring us to faith, he also keeps us in the faith and empowers us to serve Jesus. So, my prayer for you today is that *you* will **overflow with the Holy Spirit**.

You have made a great start with that during your weekly confirmation classes. Whenever we open our Bibles and study God’s Word, it is as if we are opening the floodgate of heaven and God the Holy Spirit is being poured into our hearts and minds.

It’s like taking this glass and pouring water into it so that it overflows. That’s what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives. He wants **to overflow in your life** so that you know with absolute certainty that your sins are forgiven, that you are a child of God, that God will work all things out for your good, that heaven is your home, that Jesus is with you and he will never leave you.

The Holy Spirit overflows in your life so that you know those truths. And that’s really important for us. You see, we are just passing through this life. We are on a temporary journey. But we have many distractions which try to fill our lives with things that really do not matter. God wants us to keep the right focus while we walk through this life.

The apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:1-4, **“Therefore, because you were raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”**

You and I need the Holy Spirit to set our minds on things above. I can’t stress this enough. You see, it is so easy for us to just focus on the things of this world.

You are going to face so many temptations to simply put aside the Holy Spirit and his Word, and instead of being filled with him, the temptation is to be filled with so many other things, things that do not last. And it doesn’t necessarily even have to be sinful things. But we are tempted to spend so much time and energy on things that just don’t matter in the grand scheme of eternity. Do you know what I mean?

Use this glass as an illustration of filling our minds with the things of this world. We constantly think about video games, what kind of car we will drive, what house we will live in, what job we will have, what our spouse will be like. We fill our lives with all those things. And we spend so much time on those things that we do not think about the things from above.

And what happens? Those things fill our hearts and minds. They crowd out all the things the Holy Spirit wants to pour into our lives. For example, nothing on earth can compare to the endless joys that God has prepared for you in heaven. Nothing. Take the best meal you’ve shared with your family, the best hotel you’ve stayed in, and the best time you’ve had hanging out with friends and multiply that by infinity and you still don’t come close to what Jesus has earned for you and prepared for you. That’s what’s yours because the Holy Spirit is living inside of you. And those are the things the Holy Spirit wants to overflow in your lives.

Now, I’m going to guess that it’s probably hard for you to imagine right now ever letting go of the prize of eternal life. This is an exciting day for all of you. And yet it happens. In our own church body, four out of every ten confirmands stop attending church two years after they’ve been confirmed. They focus on filling their lives with other things. The statistics show that 40% of you will stop going to church within two years. That’s approximately seven of you. That’s the statistic. I pray that is not for you.

Does this mean that those people have given up on Jesus and stopped believing in him? Not necessarily. But what they forget is that if they’re not regularly being filled with the Holy Spirit, then they’re being filled with other things that can easily replace the Holy Spirit in their lives.

But the Devil has his lies. And he wants desperately to replace the Holy Spirit’s truth with his empty lies. The Devil will even use your knowledge of Christ’s words to twist and distort you into believing something that’s not in God’s Word.

Take, for example, one of the greatest gifts you and I have received: Jesus’ forgiveness. The Devil huffs, “Fine. If Jesus really always forgives sins, then it shouldn’t matter how you live.” The devil starts to fill you with his lies. “If you find someone you love, then it doesn’t matter what you do. Move in together. Play house without the courage of pledging before God and his people through marriage vows that you are truly committed to each other ‘til death do you part.” And he pours his lies in your life.

And it’s not just the Devil’s lies we face. We also have a sinful nature that does not want to be filled by the Holy Spirit. We have a sinful nature that doesn’t want anybody to tell us what to do. I want to be my own god. I want to dictate my own life. The sinful nature inside of us doesn’t want to serve others in love. No. We want to be the center of the universe.

Being filled with things other than the Holy Spirit doesn't look so good. So, what do we need? We need the Holy Spirit to keep turning us to Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and our minds so that the truth of God lives there.

How does he do that? Well, we've already mentioned the importance of staying in God's Word. In your personal lives, you read your devotions. You get together with friends and study the Word. You join the teen Bible class and grow in your faith. You regularly come to worship and sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his Word. All of the time you spend in God's Word is important. But there is another way that the Holy Spirit overflows in your life.

In a little while you will for the first time receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. I hope you're excited about this. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper fills you with the Holy Spirit. How so? Well, it won't be through a feeling you get by coming to Communion. Rather it will be through the declaration of Jesus' words, where he says that with the bread and wine Jesus is giving you his very body and blood just as he has promised. And through this sacrament, God the Holy Spirit will speak to your heart and mind words that you so desperately need to hear, "Your sins are forgiven." God loves to encourage us in such tangible, personal ways. And through that, **you overflow with the Holy Spirit.**

Just look at the events of that Pentecost 2,000 years ago. Wasn't it enough that the Holy Spirit made his presence known through the sound of a violent rushing wind? Sure. But then he also appeared as little tongues of fire that rested on each of the disciples! There too God made his presence known in a personal, tangible way.

Now, you may wish that little flames would also dance on top of your heads during this service today. Oh, boy, wouldn't that be something? Wouldn't that be a miracle that would really prove to you and everyone else here that your faith in Jesus is not misplaced? Right?

But let me ask you, "What effect did the sound of the rushing wind and the tongues of fire have on the crowds that gathered on that Pentecost Day?" They were confused and completely baffled. Some even mocked the disciples and ridiculed them. It wasn't until Peter started preaching to them that the Holy Spirit entered their hearts so they could make sense of everything.

Here's my point. No amount of miracles can convince you better of the things you have learned in confirmation class. You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he overflows in your life through the Word and Sacrament.

So, that brings us back to the beginning, doesn't it? If you want to stay a Christian your whole life, as you are about to tell us that you want to do with your confirmation vows, then you need to be overflowing with the Holy Spirit.

Don't let schoolwork, or work schedules, or anything else stand in the way of coming to hear and study God's Word on a regular basis. Don't be so arrogant to think to yourself, "Oh, I know all this already." Don't let anything in this world crowd God's truth out of your life. No. Make it a regular discipline in your life to connect yourself with God's Word and Sacrament. You'll never be sorry that you did, for when you are overflowing with the Holy Spirit, then you are equipped to overflow with blessings for other people.

That's exactly the effect the Holy Spirit had on the Apostle Peter on Pentecost 2,000 years ago. When some made fun of the disciples for what was going on, Peter, the one who had once cowardly denied Jesus, now stood up and boldly told the crowd of the coming end of the world and that the only way to escape God's judgment was through faith in Jesus. How do you explain the change in Peter's demeanor? **Peter was overflowing with the Holy Spirit.** And Peter's words and life became a blessing for those who gathered on that day.

My friends, the end of the world is much closer today. We see the signs all around us with violence and deadly disease, wars and rumors of wars. People are confused with what they see happening in the Middle East. They wonder why it seems as though the world is becoming more and more ungodly. Why has the love of most grown cold?

You can actually tell them because you know. Jesus said this would happen. You can tell them about sin and tell them about their Savior. You can model for people what it means to call on the name of the Lord and demonstrate that you are saved in Christ. When you open your mouth in this way, you're not just trickling with truth. You are **overflowing with the Holy Spirit.** May God always bless you as you do that in your Christian lives. Amen.