

## **Pentecost: Rejoice and Remember**

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

### Litany based on Psalm 8

Leader: When I look at your heavens,

**All: the work of your fingers,**

Leader: the moon and the stars,

**All: which you have set in place,**

Leader: what is man that you are mindful of him,

**All: and the son of man that you care for him?**

Leader: We worship you, Lord, In the name of the Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit.

**Deut 16:9-12** <sup>9</sup>“You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. <sup>10</sup>Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you. <sup>11</sup>And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. <sup>12</sup>You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.

**Acts 2: 1-13** When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup>And they were amazed and astonished, saying,

“Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, <sup>11</sup>both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” <sup>12</sup>And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup>But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

***...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” – Acts 2:11***

**We hear them telling the stories that grandma and grandpa used to tell us as kids in our own native tongue... we are children of God trusting in the Father once again.**

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**Can you imagine this scene. Ancient Jerusalem. Crowded streets. A great commotion early in the morning of preparation for another day of festival or the long journey home... People spilling out of homes and from the market - into the street to see what had happened to the home rocked by a mighty rushing wind.**

**It might have sounded like an explosion, but I think the apostles chose their words carefully here. The roar of chaotic sound drowning out all other sound or senses. Literally just the vibrations of fast-moving air bouncing off of walls and people and everything in between. Have you stood in a room or out in a field where you can't hear a thing?**

**And the visual the apostles remember is not paper or clothes or hair blowing through out the room and into their faces, but a bright flame – maybe just a hot white flash arching to every person in the room, or the gentle lap of red and orange flames forking out to reach everyone. The Sound was overwhelming, but the bright searing flames were not consuming. The opposite. It was from this flash of sound and light that a new sound arose. People speaking in every language ... the mighty works of God! The room was filled, soon the streets were filled, the commotion too memorable to forget or to avoid comment.**

**This is what Pentecost was supposed to be. A remembering and a Rejoicing... Not in what we have done, or ought to have done... but remember and rejoice in the mighty works of God. At least this is Moses description of it in Deuteronomy 16. After seven weeks of harvest, when things begin to wind down and you have the first and best fruits of your labor... gather together and share them with each other. Rejoice and remember. Rejoice in the gifts of God, the faithfulness of the Spring Harvest.**

**And just as important - rejoice in the covenant you have with God remembering what happened on Sinai so long ago. God made you one of His own, One of His family. This was the point of Pentecost, remember that on Sinai God made you His own through the gift of the Ten Commandments. And just as your ancestors swore to keep these laws, you to... on the anniversary of the first agreement ... you to, each Pentecost, swear to keep God's law under penalty of death. If you keep the law, you are His... If you don't you are dead to the family.**

**Then they would bring the knife down on the fatted calves neck, spilling its blood upon the alter... May what happen to**

**the sacrificial animal happen to you if you do not keep the laws written on stone. This point cannot be understated. It seems foreign to us. But that was the covenant for generations.**

**Rejoice that you have made it another year, remember what God has done. Rejoice and remember. Give thanks for the work of God to provide your food and keep His law.**

**The only problem with this age-old religious festival... is that we are not very good at keeping the law. Especially the first one. You shall have no other God's. Don't worship, remember, rejoice in anything but the – mighty works of God. Humanity has never been really good at that one. We put our faith in the wrong things. We make our money and success and security into Idols. We deserve the fate of the sacrificial animal.**

**And this was very apparent to the religious people who year after year, generation after generation, gathered together to feast on Pentecost. By the time of the early church Pentecost had become an empty ritual. Just an excuse to get together with family and get wasted.**

**Or cling to whatever pious good deeds you had done that year. At least you weren't like other worse sinners. There were some who certainly thought the whole point of Pentecost was to bribe God by giving Him the first of the harvest... and if you had made some particularly poor choices that year, or there was some unexplainable hardships in the family, well just give a little more than the usually 10 percent. Or maybe you would give 2 cows instead of one.**

**Anything to avoid the glaringly obvious reality that no one there celebrating this festival of weeks, in Jerusalem or the local village, had done what they were supposed to do... what made them children of God, what made them the family of**

**Isreal. Keep the ten commandments. Don't remember and rejoice in other things. Especially on this day of Pentecost.**

**And here is how we know this is what they were doing, other than our own human nature. That they were trying to avoid the obvious. We don't have to put ourselves in their shoes. What they remember about this particular Pentecost festival and what they wrote down tells us the whole picture of what God was doing to reconnect his family to Himself.**

**3,000**

**The first time Moses came down from Sinai, with the tablets, to see the people worshipping a golden calf... do you remember what happened? 3,000 people suffered the fate of the sacrificial animal. 3,000 people were cut out of the family of God. 3,000 people died.**

**On the first Pentecost that we rejoice and remember today... 3,000 people were saved. Baptized into this new relationship with God. The family gained 3,000 members. This was no empty ceremony. People literally saw God again, some for the first time.**

**And it was not because there were a select 3,000 people that avoided Idol worship better than the rest.**

**They weren't the 3,000 people that gave the biggest percentage of their harvest. The Widow with her mite had them all beat.**

**They were not the 3,000 people who had repented the most sincerely, nor the 3,000 with the most good deeds and value signals.**

**These 3,000 were the first of many to be crucified to the heart. Clinging not to their own religious activity, but to the mighty works of God.**

*...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” – Acts 2:11*

**We hear them telling the stories that grandma and grandpa used to tell us as kids in our own native tongue... we are children of God trusting in the Father once again.**

**Another sacrifice took the place of the Pentecost sacrifice. And once again the truth rang true. May what happened to Jesus on the cross happen to you when you fail. May you die to yourself, and your failure and your independence ... resurrected to cling to Christ and His promise, and His presence once again.**

**That is the story of Pentecost and that is the story of Acts. The story of you, the church, then and now.**

**This is how Paul describes it in Romans:**

*<sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

*<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*

**- Romans 6:4-5**

