

Pentecost [B] [June 8, 2003] (A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)

From today's Gospel lesson:

**John 7:37 "The last day of the celebration was the most important day..."**

What celebration?

In the Bible's Old Testament, God told the nation of Israel to have several religious feasts, celebrations. Today we use the word "HOLIDAY." In the OT, Israel had SEVEN religious celebrations every year (*Leviticus 23*). Later, the Jewish people themselves added three more, making TEN total.

Some time in the future, maybe we can study each of the ten religious feasts. But today we can focus on two.

...not PASSOVER. Jesus got crucified on PASSOVER. We are past that (finish).

What is today? Yes, PENTECOST. That name, PENTECOST, is a Greek word meaning "50th day" -- The 50th Day after, what? Easter? Remember PENTECOST first was a Jewish celebration, not a Christian day. Israel already had that celebration in the Old Testament, before Easter happened.

Another name for PENTECOST was "the Feast of Weeks." Every year after the first farm harvest, that Sabbath (Saturday), then counting seven weeks, 49 days. On the 50th day, Sunday, Israel must bring several offerings to the Lord, offerings from their harvest. People must do no work, but must celebrate with THANKSGIVING.

That was the Jewish PENTECOST.

But later, Jewish people added a 2nd meaning to that celebration. PENTECOST later became the day Israel celebrated God giving Moses the 10 Commandments, His Holy Law.

That is the reason many Jewish people from many different nations came to Jerusalem, on that day, seven weeks after Jesus Resurrection.

They came to give an offering to God.

But instead, God gave an offering to them, His Holy Spirit.

They came to celebrate God's LAW, that shows all our sins.  
 But instead, God gave them GOSPEL,  
 that announces God forgives all of our sins,  
 and shows our wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ.

What can we remember in the Pentecost story?

The Disciples, meeting together for prayer.  
 The Holy Spirit came with light that looked like fire  
 on the head of every believer.  
 Disciples speak many different languages.  
 Many people, curious, come to see what is happening.  
 Peter preaching.  
 And 3,000 believe and get baptized.

We sometimes forget from the story: What did Peter say in his sermon?

Peter told the people: Who Jesus is, and what Jesus did to save them from sin and hell. Peter told them again how Jesus suffered and died on the cross. Peter told them how Jesus arose to life again, and now Jesus reigns in heaven.

We sometimes forget, also: What did the people say?

Before Peter's sermon, the people talked together about the way the Disciples could speak their various languages. That surprised them. But the people also said, they noticed that the Disciples praised God in their language. The Disciples announced the wonderful things God did.

And after Peter's sermon, the people felt guilty for their sins, and they asked, "What must we do???"

Peter told them: "Repent (confess your sins) and get baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for your forgiveness. And you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit." That same Holy Spirit that the people saw in 12 Disciples, they (the people) could have also.

Jesus made the same promise to us in our Gospel lesson today:

*"If you are thirsty, come to ME and drink. The Holy Writings say, 'If you believe in ME, then from your heart will flow living water.'" Jesus meant that those believing in HIM would receive the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus announced this in the Jerusalem temple, on the last day of another important Jewish celebration. What celebration?

Not Pentecost.

Not Passover.

This happened during the Feast of TABERNACLES, or sometimes called the Feast of BOOTHES, or tents.

God told the Jewish people to every year make a small rough tents from trees, and green leafy branches. They must live in them for one week, worship God, and remember how their fathers lived 40 years in tents, wandering in the desert between Egypt and Israel.

On the last day of that celebration Jesus said, *"If you are thirsty, come to ME and drink. "*

When Israel lived in the desert 40 years, they had a problem with water. They didn't have enough. They became very thirsty. Moses prayed, and God gave them water. Twice that water flowed from a rock. And all the people got enough fresh water to drink.

Jesus tells us that

when we understand our need,

when we understand that

without Him, we are lost in the desert of our own sin,

when we understand that

without Him, we will die... forever in hell,

when we understand that

without Him, life now means nothing,

when we thirst for life,

and when we come to HIM,

Jesus will give us His life.

He will forgive our sin.

He will give us peace and joy and hope.

When we are thirsty, cool water can really satisfy us.

What water does for our body  
is the same as  
what God's Holy Spirit does for our soul.

But that is not all! Jesus quotes from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (58:11)  
*'If you believe in ME, then from YOUR heart will flow living water.'*

We can't keep the blessing from Jesus only for ourselves. We share Him with other people.

When Jesus blesses us with peace, joy, and hope from the Holy Spirit, like a river, or a water spring from inside us, all the blessing spills-out and splashes on other people, making them thirsty for Jesus, too.

If that is what we want,  
and if that is what we want to give to other people,  
we can't make it happen ourselves.  
We can't really give anything from ourselves, anything good.

Jesus said, *"If you are thirsty, come to ME."*

As Peter told us in his Pentecost sermon that, before we can see that River of Life, the Holy Spirit, come in us and flow through us, we must come to Jesus, confess our sins, and in Jesus, let our sin die. When Jesus makes clean, forgiven, then His Living Water, His Holy Spirit, can flow into us, and flow through us to other people.

On PENTECOST, God first touched 120 Disciples with the Holy Spirit.

Then He touched 3,000 new believers.

Then later, He touched us.

Who will He touch next?

**PRAYER:**

Lord Jesus, You can see us. You know our need. You can see how dry and thirsty our souls are. You see our sinful thoughts, actions, and attitudes that make us dirty every day. Forgive us. Heal us. Give us life. Send us your Living Water. Fill us daily with Your Holy Spirit. Then, same-as Peter, we can praise you for all the

wonderful things You do, and we can announce Your name, Your story, to all who thirst for life.

Thank You for this wonderful gift.

Thank You for Your promise.

Amen.