

SERMON
First Lutheran Church
Aitkin, Minnesota
Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21
Romans 8:22-27
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
May 27, 2012

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE Toot, toot, toot! Kids, when I was in high school, I used to play the cornet in our school band. I was never very good because I didn't practice enough. My mom and dad bought this horn for me. My band director taught me how to play. Then for a while, my music was fun for me and sometimes was enjoyed by other people too. Now I don't make music with it at all. Is that a total loss/disappointment? No, because I use other gifts that are fun for me and that other people can enjoy too.

A week ago I attended the Aitkin High School Band Concert and heard many of your older brothers and sisters playing their instruments together to make wonderful, fun music. Each instrument sounded differently. Each student played from different parts of music. Then all of it came together to make a wonderful concert for them to be proud of and for all of us to enjoy hearing.

On the first Sunday of Pentecost, God's brand new Christians were all gathered together in Jerusalem. They were there waiting to see what God wanted them to do. Jesus had just been raised from the dead and before returning to heaven, Jesus promised that God was **going to send the Holy Spirit to stay with the people**. Well, the Holy Spirit came that day, entered into each of their lives and gifted them with the possibility of speaking different languages. When they spoke these other languages, the foreign visitors around them were able to hear and understand all about Jesus. It was amazing!

To this very day, the **Good News about Jesus comes to people in many different ways**. And it usually comes to us in ways, times and places that are familiar to us, that fit us just right. The Holy Spirit, which you received at your Baptism, lives in us and helps us to: **Believe in God**, to **enjoy and use** God's love, hope and help in our own lives and **share** God's love, hope and help with others in ways that they can understand.

Today, God's **Holy Spirit is in us** and **working to love and care for people through us**. Who knows how God might do that through you today. Thanks be to God. Amen.

ADULT MESSAGE

My grandparents, John and Johanna Ostman, pulled up roots and left Sweden with their two little boys and headed for America. It was in the early 1900s and they were less than 30 years old. Everything that they could take along was packed into a few steamer trunks and lugged with them on their passage. They traveled clear across the Atlantic Ocean and finally landed on the North Shore of Lake Superior at Finland, Minnesota. **How do you decide what to bring along to a new world?** They fled poverty and dreamt of a new land, a fresh start and the opportunity to prosper as a family. In the precious space of one of those steamer trunks, **they carried a giant, heavy old Bible. Or perhaps better, the Word of God carried them** in the **hope** that informed all the rest of their lives, family, farm, community and church. It may even have been Jesus who gave them the courage to leave the familiar and to embark on what must have seemed to some a foolish adventure into the unknown.

Once settled in Alborn, Minnesota, my grandparents helped to build Bethlehem Lutheran Church of the Augustana Synod. My grandfather left early every Sunday morning in order to tramp through the one mile trail that extended from their home to the church. Once there, he got the wood stove fired up so that the little white-steeple church would be warm when all of the other pioneer settlers arrived for worship. Was worship an **obligation** for them, or an **opportunity**? When they read scripture, prayed and taught the faith to their children, was that a **“have to”** or a **“want to?”** Did they choose to **face this new world alone**, or with the **help of their faithful God?**

Long before my grandparents came to this land, Swedish settlers came to the Aitkin area and build **Maria Chapel, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church** and a number of other white-steeple places of worship. First those adventurous immigrants built their houses and then their churches. They worked to secure traveling preachers for worship and to establish Sunday schools which they could operate themselves. Initially, Swedish was used in worship and in confirmation. The children learned English when they attended school. Eventually English language services were also offered. Today Swedish, or Norwegian, Finnish, Danish or German are only rarely spoken in the American Lutheran churches. First Lutheran Church has roots that go back 120 years to some of those north woods congregations. Today, the Good News of Jesus is proclaimed in many other languages, not necessarily all spoken.

My father was raised in a Danish/Norwegian family. He wasn't brought up in the church. My mother could only get him to go to worship if she begged and pleaded. Even then, he would only go on Easter or Christmas. **Dad just didn't have time or need for church.** That was until Rev. Carl Anderson came to Albourn.

It was a bad summer for the farmers. There had been a lot of rain so their precious hay crop was not getting into the barns. Hay was rotting in the fields. Dad was a factory worker, not a farmer, but he knew their desperate plight. And he heard about how Pastor Anderson, once a farmer himself, had gone into the fields to help the men gather in their hay crops. That was enough for my dad. If that pastor cared enough about people to go and dirty his hands in the hayfield, maybe he was worth listening to. Dad started going to church. That happened before I was born. By the time I came along our family never missed a Sunday of worship. It was my dad who insisted that we pause every evening at the supper table while the food waited. We would then take turns reading aloud the "**Christ in Our Home**" daily devotional. We concluded with prayer, "**Come Lord Jesus**" adding petitions for the farmers trying to get in their hay, my aunt in the hospital, or the neighbor boy who was in trouble with the law. That pastor spoke my father's language.

On that first **Pentecost Sunday**, the Holy Spirit entered into our world with the sound of a violent wind, on tongues of fire and filled every believer who was there. Each person was **gifted** not only with God's **Holy Spirit**, but also with the **ability to relate the wonderful news** of God's great love for all people through Jesus. **That day was all God's work!** That day the Holy Spirit came crashing into their world – for them, in them and then through them. Our Acts text concludes, "**Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**" Salvation is living in the love and care of a gracious God. Salvation is loving and trusting God enough to let God guide your life and actions. Salvation is traveling across perilous seas trusting that God goes with you. Salvation is life lived well because you know that God loves and cares for you no matter where you are. Salvation is investing blood, sweat and tears into building churches even when you can't see God. Salvation is having the hope that you and your world rest secure in the faithful love and embrace of God. **Salvation is telling others that your hope comes from God.**

The Apostle Paul mentions the word "**hope**" five times in our second lesson. He writes, "**For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for**

it with patience.” Paul goes on to say, **“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”**

Do you hear it? God’s Holy Spirit comes to:

- **Claim and adopt** us as God’s children – precious to God,
- **Plant faith** in our hearts – never need to be alone,
- **Give us hope and help** – never need to be overwhelmed,
- **Intercede for us** – at times when we don’t even know which end is up.

Do you see it? The Holy Spirit doesn’t just twiddle thumbs waiting for us to realize our need for God. The Holy Spirit doesn’t sit idly by hoping that we might decide to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit doesn’t snooze while we lose. No, the Holy Spirit is **constantly moving to give us life and hope** in Christ! When I am up to my ears in alligators, when I am so overwhelmed with my long list of responsibilities, when all I can do is **“sigh...”** Then it is that God is at God’s best. Then it is, when I give up on trying to control the world, that God steps forward, ready all along, and **carries me into a new moment, into a new day.**

Somehow, the Holy Spirit speaks in my language and brings me the Good News that God is faithful, loving and can be counted upon no matter what. As my labored breathing slows, as peace of mind returns, **“Sigh, God why did I wait so long to turn to you?”**

What language do you speak? What language does God speak? One of our home-bound members said to me, **“I’m so glad that our church sends out the bulletin ahead of time each week. Then I can listen to worship on the radio and follow along. I don’t know if people might think I’m crazy, but I sit here by myself and sing along with the radio service.** Her language must be **radio.**

I heard of another older shut-in this past week. She **works her way through the pictorial directory,** lifting up different people each day as she prays for their well-being. Sounds like her language must be **pictorial directory** and she’s advocating for you. **Do you suppose God is listening?**

A few weeks ago, a teenager from Two Harbors took her own life. Several kids from our church knew her from being on a youth retreat together. The week

before she died, a half dozen of her friends had started a Saturday night youth service in their church. Pastor Scott Jacob's son helped to lead the service. He is a 21 year old college student. He was so nervous beforehand when he was talking to his out-of-town father. Pastor Scott told his son, "**Just tell them about Jesus.**" Fifty people came and everything went fine. The next week, after the suicide death, 250+ people showed up for that youth service. Those same half dozen young kids and the 21 year old, having no clue what they should do, gave permission for everyone to grieve together. Individual candles were lit. Holy Communion was shared. Each of the half dozen kids had a chance to share their faith in the face of this terrible loss. When everything was said and done, the entire place was lifted and those people were empowered to go back out with **renewed hope for the new day.** Later that night, that twenty-one year old college student told his father, "**Dad, I don't even know what I said.**" **Maybe he told them about Jesus...**

The Holy Spirit blew into the lives of those early Christians on that first Pentecost Sunday. God's Spirit is blowing here today as well. The Spirit is moving in the life of the eighth grader who doesn't want to be at confirmation, in the life of the twenty-something who thinks there is no god, in the person who is wondering how they will pay the bills this month, and in the life of the person who has seen 90 plus years in this world and who is singing along with us over the radio.

My grandparents dreamt of a new land, a fresh start, of opportunity for a better life. They **carried along a giant, heavy Bible.** **Or, the Word of God carried them in the kind of hope that empowers us to trust God in every part of our lives and world.** And to this very day the Holy Spirit is still **coming to us and moving through us** with the **Good News of Jesus.** Thanks be to God. Amen.