

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
June 12, 2011**

Joel 2:28-32

We've Got Spirit!

- 1. We've Got Spirit?**
- 2. How about you?**

Hymns: 176 – 179 – 181 – 188 – 190

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

It's Friday night and you are in a gym and it is packed with players and fans. On one side of the gym, everyone is wearing blue; on the other side, everyone is wearing red. The smell in the air is that weird mix of popcorn, sweat and basketball shoes - a smell that is found only in a High School gym. The basketball is dribbling, the coaches are hollering plays, the band is playing, and the crowd is cheering. During a break in the action, the cheerleaders come out and lead the fans in a familiar cheer. They begin by yelling, "We've got spirit, yes we do; we've got spirit how 'bout you?" The crowd responds by yelling the same. Back and forth they go, each side getting progressively louder, until the cheer end with both sides shouting, "We've got more." And because we are a Lutheran church, and not a Pentecostal church, I'm not going to ask you to start that cheer today, but that cheer sums up what this day of Pentecost is all about: spirit, namely, the Holy Spirit. It is about the Holy Spirit working in our individual lives. It is about the Holy Spirit working in our church. It is about the Holy Spirit working in the world. The day of Pentecost is the third great festival in the Christian church year and they all have

salvation as their focus. Christmas is about the arrival of the Savior; Easter is about the victory of the Savior; and Pentecost is about the spread of the Savior. On this wonderful day where we focus on spirit, the prophet Joel proclaims who that spirit is for as he says, "*and afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*"

1 - Can you think of some examples from the Old Testament when God poured out his Spirit through dreams and/or visions? When God wanted Joseph to know he would rule over his brothers, he gave him a vivid dream to tell him it would happen. How about Joseph's dad, Jacob? He had a dream with a stairway to heaven in which God showed him that he would be with him and bless him. A few months ago we talked about Ezekiel's famous vision of the valley of the bones, where dry bones came to life. There was also Daniel and his dream of four beasts which foretold history for the next six centuries.

And there were also visions about the Savior. Until God revealed it to Isaiah, no one knew that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. Until God revealed it to Micah, no one knew he would be born in Bethlehem. Until God revealed it to David, no one knew that to pay for our sins, Jesus would painfully suffer and die. Incredible dreams and visions that were given; wonderful truths revealed through them. Yet, as incredible as the dreams and prophecies were, they were limited. Not everyone had them.

In our text, Joel points to a day when God would pour out his Spirit on all believers. Men, women, young old, servants and masters, people of every race would

receive God's power. The day that Joel got to speak about in advance was Pentecost, as it was described for us in the lesson from Acts.

What a wonderful event that must have been, a day full of sights and sounds. There were the tongues of fire resting on all the people - visible evidence of the Holy Spirit. There was the rushing sound of a violent wind - audible evidence of the Holy Spirit (In Hebrew and Greek, the word for wind and spirit is the same). There is also the sound of many languages, this gift given to these ordinary believers to speak in understandable foreign tongues.

The prophecies of Joel were fulfilled over 2000 years ago on the first Pentecost. They continue to be fulfilled today on this Pentecost. Believers then shouted, "We've got Spirit, yes we do! We've got Spirit, how 'bout you?" We can shout back, "We've got Spirit, yes we do!"

We can shout that because of God's love. Everything that God has ever done and does now is motivated by love for his people, which includes you and me. Adam and Eve were brought into this world because of God's love. Noah and his family were saved from the flood because of God's love. Abraham was promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the sands of the sea because of God's love. Jesus came into our world, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, rose on Easter and ascended into heaven because of God's love. The Spirit came on Pentecost because of God's love.

Numerous forces in this world try to pull us apart from God and strip his love from our lives. Some of these forces are external: money, health, relationships... Some of these forces are internal doubts: Does God really love me and care for me? Can God really forgive this sin? Am I doing what is pleasing in his sight?" Behind all of these forces, outside and in, is the devil - who lurks behind our lives like a storm

cloud, trying to disrupt God's plans and ruin our relationship with him.

But it can't happen if the Spirit is there. So the important question to ask is this: How do we know the Spirit is living in us? The same way I know there is a movie on this DVD. First off, I can look at the case. It tells me what the movie is, who is in it, how long it will be; and I believe the case. Likewise, we believe the Spirit is living in us because the Bible tells us that is the case; and by faith, we believe what the Bible says. But secondly and more assuredly, I can know there is a movie on this DVD by playing it and seeing it. In the same way, we can know that the Holy Spirit is in us by seeing the result of his work in our lives, just like we do with Peter.

On that first Pentecost, on that day with all those miraculous signs of the Holy Spirit, nowhere is the Holy Spirit's power seen and heard more clearly than in the sermon of the Apostle Peter. But Have you ever seen a person do something that caused you to respond, "Wow! I didn't think he had it in them!" There were probably many who thought that after Peter's sermon. Peter was the one who usually regretted when he opened his mouth. He was the one who never quite understood exactly who Jesus was or what he came to accomplish. So do you think Peter just happened to get lucky and say just the right things during his great sermon? Do you think, just like that, Peter understood all the reasons why Jesus came to earth, did what he did and then ascended into heaven? No. The truth is, Peter didn't have it in him. That sermon and that sudden understanding of Jesus' work was God keeping his promise: "*and afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*" What he had was the Spirit in him. God kept his promise given to Joel.

God continues to keep that promise. Like Peter, we don't have it in us to be patient with our children, to be loving to our spouses, to be forgiving to our friends. We don't have it in us to be kind with our words or gentle with our actions. We don't have it in us to love God, to love our neighbors, or even, to love ourselves. So God put something inside of us. He gave us his Spirit. The Spirit fills us with faith through the Word and sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Because of the Spirit, you believe that the Bible is the true Word of God. Because of the Spirit, you believe your baptism attaches you to Jesus. Because of the Spirit, you believe that in the Lord's Supper you receive Jesus' body and blood. You've got Spirit, yes you do, and God gave that Spirit to get ready for a very important day.

2 - In 1958, the nation of Ethiopia lost 167,000 tons of grain to a plague of locusts, enough grain to feed 1 million people for 1 year. If you are asking what that has to do with Pentecost, here is your answer. A locust plague was the immediate reason why God inspired Joel to write his short book of prophecy. God used a locust plague and devastating drought afterward as a severe warning to his people to be ready for something. It was to get them ready for this: *"I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."*

Just after giving words of prophecy about the day of Pentecost, God gave very different words of prophecy. They were words of prophecy about Judgment Day. Just as there is a close connection between Good Friday and Easter, or Christmas and New Year's, there is a close connection between Pentecost and Judgment Day. On Pentecost, people saw things they had never seen before. On Judgment Day, people will

see things they have never seen before. Jesus told the disciples Pentecost was coming and it came. Jesus tells us Judgment Day is coming and it will come. God sent his Spirit on Pentecost in order to get the world ready for Judgment Day. The two go hand in hand. And Pentecost brings up a great urgency. Because of that urgency, the disciples spent the rest of their lives living and sharing the message of Pentecost.

The message of Pentecost is very simple. It is the message of the entire Bible. **Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

Pentecost, like the other two great church festivals (Easter and Christmas), comes with distractions. Some people get very focused on the physical gifts of the Holy Spirit, the tongues of fire and the speaking in tongues. Some people get overly focused on Peter and his great sermon and make him the star. The focus of Pentecost is not on what was seen and heard. It is on the one who was sent. The Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of God's promise and the continuation of his plan of salvation for all people.

The Holy Spirit came and filled the people, and they didn't stay huddled together. They took the truth and spread out in all directions and the Spirit took salvation to the ends of the earth.

The Holy Spirit filled ordinary people of different ages from different countries with different lives and he built the church. A person once said that if an artist was trying to create a picture of the church, he would have to use mosaic tiles. Up close, a mosaic doesn't look like much; chipped and broken tiles set in grout at all sorts of angles. Yet, when you step back, what do you see; a work of great beauty.

Up close, look at the church and what do you see? People whose lives chipped and broken by sin, people who are not always at their best, people who are often timid and shy. Yet, step back and what

do you see? A picture of great beauty: Saints by the blood of Christ, believers by the power of the Spirit. Proclaimers, sharers, people who live by the Gospel and for the Gospel; a church that accomplishes the work of God.

All because, we've got Spirit! Thank God that Jesus fulfilled his work and went into heaven, and that he sent the Holy Spirit to work in the world.