

Sermon

You will Receive

Dan Neary

Today the Church celebrates Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the church.

- We had 7 Sundays at the beginning of 2009
- 7 Sundays between Ash Wednesday and Easter (Lent)
- And now 7 Sundays after Easter leading us to Pentecost Sunday



It is Pentecost Sunday for the *Church Universal*... not merely the Pentecostal Church, or a Pentecostal Church like The Chapel.

The Book of Common Prayer, for example, for today's service reads:

Almighty God,

*on this day you opened the way
of eternal life to every race and nation*

by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit:

Shed abroad this gift throughout the world

**by the preaching of the Gospel,
that it may reach to the ends of the earth;**

through Jesus Christ our Lord,

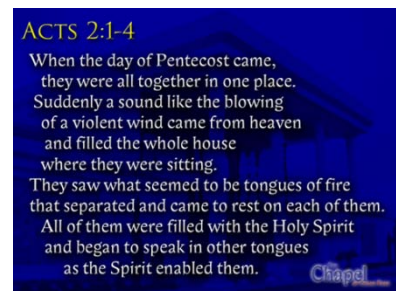
who lives and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Today we celebrate the birth of Church as it is recorded in Acts 2.

- Jesus promised the Holy Spirit
 - God's ongoing, indwelling presence
 - He "breathed" the Spirit onto His followers
- Jesus, prior to His ascension into Heaven, gave specific instructions to go to that upper room, and wait.
- This is what they had waited for, this
 - overwhelming presence of the Spirit
 - that looked like fire,
 - overtook their speech, and
 - set the Church into motion



What started here changed the World. No matter what your faith perspective, it is impossible to deny the impact of the Christian church. It all started on that day of Pentecost; today we celebrate that beginning.

We've titled this series "Path to Pentecost"... so it should be clear that **we've arrived** at our destination. For the purposes of our series, the path ends here.

- We'll have a guest next week, and then
- I'll start a new series from Galatians for the summer



We've designated the beginning of the story in Acts as our reading for this morning; the real point is at the **other end** of the story.

Let's turn our attention to Acts chapter 29.

I'll give you a minute to turn there in your Bibles. There is, of course, no Acts 29; Acts only has 28 chapters.



We are Acts 29!

We believe that what started in Acts 2, and runs through Acts 28, was merely the beginning. We believe that what started in Acts 2 is for us today... that the Book of Acts, (the Acts of the Church) is ongoing and will continue until God brings about "the final and full realization of His Kingdom." (<http://www.cedarpark.org/thechapel/resource/creeds/hope.html>)

So what will we find in Acts 29? What ought to characterize the ongoing Acts of the Church?

We can look back over the past 6 weeks for at least the beginning of an answer.

Last week, our missionary guests, David and Lynn Willis, powerfully demonstrated that Acts 29 ought to be characterized by outreach. People need to hear about Jesus. The **Spirit filled life** results in spreading the good news about Jesus... around the world and around our neighborhoods.



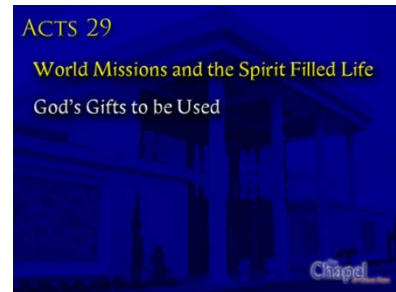
The same kind of calling that compelled Paul to go to Macedonia, the same kind of calling that came from the very mouth of Jesus:

you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.¹

That calling persists on us, the church of Acts 29.

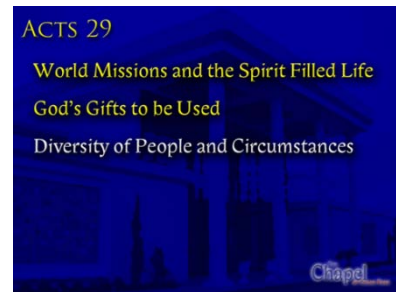
¹ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ac 1:8.

The week before that we looked at how the Holy Spirit empowered the Church to speak boldly. That *Pentecostal event* didn't merely result in strange and new tongues; the Holy Spirit added power to words that transformed lives by the thousands. It started by taking a rag-tag group of failures and made them the founding Apostles of our Church.



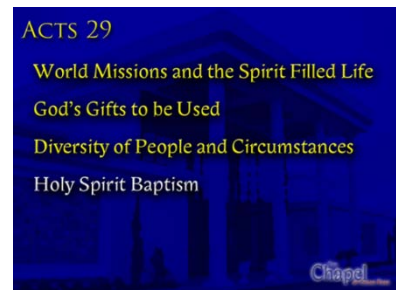
The example from the middle of Acts encouraged us to be Holy-Spirit led and Holy-Spirit empowered as we speak up about Jesus.

The week before that opened our thinking to the diversity of those who carry the message. Rosemarie Kowalski highlighted the story of women who were empowered by the Spirit, now close to 100 years ago. They faced challenges that would be insurmountable *in the natural*, but God gave them courage, faith, opportunity and power.



The stories of these women joined the stories of women who led the Church in the Book of Acts, and others throughout the years. Their stories encourage all of us to put aside our excuses and fears when it comes to being the Church of Acts 29.

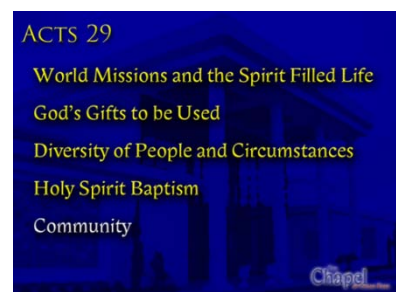
The week before that, Joe Castleberry was our guest, and he urged us to join the believers in Acts 19 and receive all that God has for us. He called us to settle for nothing less than to be filled to overflowing with God's Holy Spirit.



Our Church, the Church of Acts 29, is a Holy-Spirit-baptized church... a church filled with people who are filled with the Spirit. Not merely a church that is "Pentecostal", nor merely a church led by Spirit-filled pastors, but a church populated by people who seek everything that God has for us... to do His will and His work.

The week before that, Dr. Vertefeuille reminded us God's plan is a "be with" plan.

- Jesus demonstrated the "be with plan" in His incarnation
- Carried it through His ministry with His Disciples
- Promised His ongoing presence by the Holy Spirit
- And delivered that Holy Spirit to a community that then carried on our work in community



Jesus is with us. The Spirit is with us. And we are called to “be with” one another in this work. We are saved one by one... but we are saved to be a people, God’s people, a people who serve as the Church of Acts 29.

And, finally, the week before that, I started this whole series off, making the point that the ascension of Jesus and the coming of the promised Holy Spirit was **only the beginning**.

Jesus promised that His followers would be empowered by the Holy Spirit... and the results would number more than He ever accomplished while He was walking the earth. More miracles, more healings, more lives being transformed by the Good News, more souls for eternity in Heaven.

And we are ending, just where we started, making the point again that this is only the beginning.

What began in Acts 2 2000 years ago wasn’t merely a one-time occurrence, but is a pattern to be repeated throughout the ages. God’s people come together, seeking power from Him to do His will and work, and God shows up, enabling the supernatural through mere people... people like us.

So we ask ourselves **so what?**

What about us today?

Are we the Church of Acts 29?

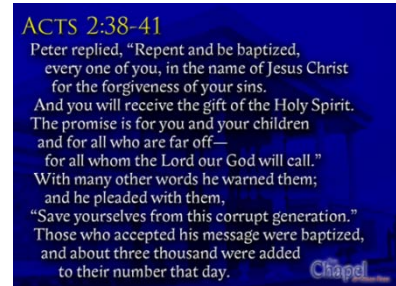
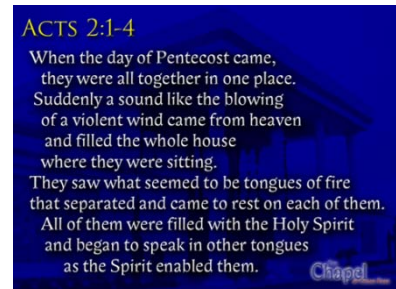
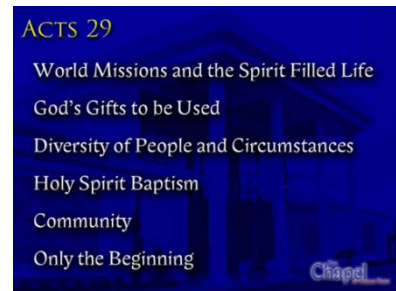
Can we be the Church of Acts 29?

Is there another step ahead of us to become the Church of Acts 29?

We can approach this from the perspective of a couple of categories evident in that last part of Acts 2 we read earlier.

First, the call is to those who have yet to hear and believe. The whole point of Pentecost is the call to Jesus. The Holy Spirit isn’t for some sort of spectacular, supernatural show... it is for drawing people to Jesus.

If you are here, or somehow hearing or reading these words, and you have yet to really hear and believe... know that the Holy Spirit is active in all this. This is not



some sort of coincidence for your amusement or information or entertainment... this is a moment for you to:

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins²

Hear the words today, respond to the urging of the Holy Spirit, and call on the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Believe today. You likely don't understand it all, but believe what you can today. Believe that Jesus loves you, paying the entire penalty in every way that we can't measure up to a Holy God. Believe that this Church loves you, and welcomes you to join us in this journey of faith.

Second, what about the gift of the Holy Spirit? The words of Peter are true:

you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift given, and possessed, by every believer. If you believe, you do not need to wonder if you have received the Holy Spirit.

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off³

But I'm confident that we would be in error if we were satisfied to only settle for **a gift** of the Holy Spirit, or merely an initial gift of the Holy Spirit. There are **gifts**

- Ranging is various kinds of gifts
- Resulting is various results (fruit of the Spirit)
- I think the gifts come in different sizes (having a variety of impacts)
- And they come in a variety of frequencies

As I've been thinking about various and frequent Spirit baptisms (with all the images of water that come with the idea of baptism), **absorbency** comes to mind. I think one of the reasons we see different kinds of impacts of Holy Spirit baptisms is that we have different kinds of absorbency.



Think about it. When you go to that rag bin in search of something to soak up a spill, you know that there are different levels of absorbency. An old shirt is less absorbent than an old cloth diaper. An old hard dish rag won't soak up as much as a fluffy towel.

Or think about a sponge. A tough, worn out, dried up sponge may be of little use when compared to a new damp sponge. Let's face it... there are times when we are

² *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ac 2:38.

³ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ac 2:39.

a whole lot more like that worn out, dried up, tough old sponge when it comes to soaking up the things of the Spirit.

And if we're going to talk about absorbency... how could we avoid talking about that modern marvel? What about the Sham-Wow!!??!?

Aren't you glad you came to church today so that the preacher could encourage you to be a "Sham-Wow for Jesus?"



What can't you do with a Sham-Wow? The super-absorbency is truly amazing... isn't it? Now I know that we can't believe everything we see as Vince the Sham-Wow guy pitches his product... but there is one scene that really catches my attention. It is when he takes that Sham-Wow, drops it into a bowl of water, soaks up most of the contents in mere moments, and then with a quick twist, nearly all the water rushes out of the Sham-Wow and back into the bowl.

I think the technical term for that is "transmittal." Absorbency is the property that allows material to quickly pick up the liquid; transmittal is the property that allows material to quickly let it go. If I were to make such a claim that we ought to be "Sham-Wow Christians", this is the picture we'd want to have in mind.

We ought to strive to be quick to absorb; "Vince" claims that the Sham-Wow will lift 12 times its weight in liquid. We have opportunity to absorb the Holy Spirit here in this place, among these people. We absorb what God has for us in prayer, and worship, and Bible reading... not just here, but every day, wherever we are.

And then we ought to strive to just as easily, and completely be wrung out... allowing that same Spirit to rush out of us as we go about our lives.

Just as the Bible casts "baptism" in terms of water and Spirit (or water and power), these concepts of absorbency and transmittal apply to more than liquid; they apply to energy as well (light, heat, electricity). Materials absorb and transmit power, light and heat (conductivity). There are materials that neither absorb nor transmit energy (nonconductive). Are we ever nonconductive, nonresponsive to Spiritual power?



Other materials absorb energy, but do not transmit. When this happens, the energy is generally converted to heat and destroys the material. That sort of thing happens to churches and Christians. We absorb the Spirit, thinking that it is just for us, failing to transmit, letting it flow through and out of us... and we heat up, and burn out.

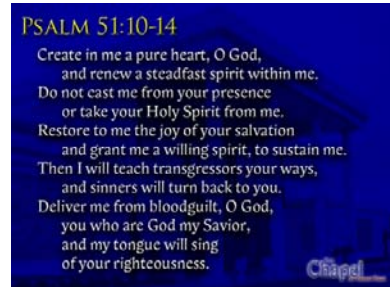
What do we do when we find ourselves unable to absorb, unable to receive God's gifts of the Holy Spirit? What if we realize that we are more like that tough old sponge than that Sham-Wow?

This is spiritual transaction... from God's Spirit to our spirits. On that Day of Pentecost, the heat and noise (the tongues of fire and the speaking in tongues) were manifestations of what was happening in the spirits of those gathered. God didn't merely Spirit-baptize mouths and speech (when that seems to be the case, I wonder if folk are simply faking it); God baptized spirits. It is a Spirit to spirit thing.

If we find that our spirits are unable to absorb, or unable to transmit God's Spirit... then we need a Spiritual answer.

We can pray with David along the lines of what we read this morning from Psalm 51.

- ¹⁰**Create** in me a pure heart, O God,
and **renew** a steadfast spirit within me.
¹¹Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
¹²**Restore** to me the joy of your salvation
and **grant** me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you.
¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
¹⁵Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.⁴



The very best thing we can do to be more receptive to God is to simply place ourselves in His care, opening ourselves to His new creation and re-creation.

So this morning, I want to take a few more minutes and urge us all to receive from God this morning.

Rather than ending the sermon and moving into our usual time of intercession, let's allow these moments to flow together. On this Pentecost Sunday, let's allow ourselves again to be baptized in God's Holy Spirit... filled and refilled, absorbing all that we can.



⁴*The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ps 51:10-15.