

"PENTECOST-THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING"

Message for the "Day of Pentecost"

From Pastor Norman Staker

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ACTS 2: 1-21 — ROMANS 8: 22-27 — JOHN 15: 26-27, 16: 4B-15



GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE
FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND
FROM OUR LORD AND SAVIOR
JESUS CHRIST. AMEN. HE IS
RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!!

There's a well-known phrase 'the gift that keeps on giving' that has been around and used many times in commercials since the early 20th Century. It's a catchy line that has been used to sell gifts for holidays such as Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. The gift that keeps on giving; what is 'the gift that keeps on giving?'

This 'gift' is meant to continually invoke the feelings people get when they receive a present. It implies that any present that gives enjoyment over and over, such as a radio or TV, a camera, a magazine subscription, would be better than a gift that only provides that feeling once, like a bouquet of flowers. The phrase was especially popular with electronics companies and some of the most well-known commercials using the phrase include the following examples: Victor radio in the early 1920's. One of their ads read as follows: "When you go to your Victor Dealer's to hear the three models of Victor Radio, you will find them beautiful, compact, and soundly built, as become Victor instruments. You will recognize them as the gift that keeps on giving, a royal gift, at a very low price!" Others using the phrase Hotpoint Appliances, DuMont Electronics, RCA Victor, Kodak Camera, Godiva Chocolates. The tagline 'the gift that keeps on giving' has become

so popular it's been used to advertise many things over the years. Whatever product the advertiser thinks will please consumers and keep on making them happy often gets labeled as 'the gift that keeps on giving.'

Our first reading, which could have also been an alternate reading for our second reading from Acts 2 says: "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

"Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes & Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia,

Judea & Cappadocia, Pontus & Asia, Phrygia & Pamphylia, Egypt & the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews & converts to Judaism); Cretans & Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!'

Amazed & perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?' Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'

In the midst of all this excitement, the apostle Peter spoke up & got the crowd's attention. Then he said to them, "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel." And beginning with those words he preached about Jesus.

Our Gospel text says: "But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going? But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned."

We celebrate the birth of Jesus and most of the world pauses to celebrate Christmas with us. We celebrate His resurrection, and much of the world

recognizes Easter as a very special day on the calendar.

But today is Pentecost, & hardly anyone, except Jews, realize it. Yet, this day is important to us, because Pentecost is the birthday of the Church, and God has given us the wonderful opportunity of being a part of it.

I want to suggest to you that Pentecost is a Gift that Keeps on Giving and on this day that the church worldwide celebrates its birthday, that's the title of this message, 'Pentecost-The Gift That Keeps on Giving.

Today is dedicated to the Holy Spirit. He is the One who opens our eyes to see Jesus through the eyes of faith. If you think about it, it takes faith to believe in the Holy Spirit too. We can't see Him. Throughout history he has appeared in the feathers of a dove and in fire and in water, but never apart from these physical elements.

The Bible doesn't talk about Him as much, and He doesn't want the attention in some senses. Jesus compared the work of the Spirit to the blowing of the wind. You can see what it does, but you can't actually see the wind. So it is with the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we could think of Him as the unsung hero of the Trinity. Without Him we couldn't have faith and we wouldn't be Christians. He is integral to our lives as Christians.

Jesus promised the disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit, even though they had never seen Him, or much less heard from Him directly either at this point. The disciples would go from a face to face experience with God in the flesh to a behind the scenes verbal experience with God. If we had a choice, our sinful nature would probably say, "No thanks!" We'd prefer the personal relationship with someone who walks with us and eats with us and speaks on our behalf. We are physical creatures. We are visual creatures.

But some might argue that the Holy Spirit is even more visual than seeing Jesus face to face. They think that the Holy Spirit is measured by the excitement in the air, the volume of the song, the emotion of the preacher, or the ability to speak in some strange language that no one can understand.

What about Pentecost? The baptism was an amazing thing for those who were there, with a tongue of fire floating through the air and touching on their heads. There was a sound of wind, but no source from where it came and no trees moving or hair blowing. Those were visual and audible signs of the Holy Spirit. But after

that, it was all a matter of speaking for them and for those who came. They spoke in Intelligible human languages, in other words, they were understandable. They weren't rolling around in the streets and being healed with fainting spells.

In today's text, Jesus doesn't point us to anything like speaking in foreign languages or tongues of fire in His prophecy. In John 14, just prior to this, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be the great reminder. "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." This is how we received the entire Bible. The Holy Spirit is the One who would verbally inspire the Word of God. 2 Peter 1:20–21 says, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." So also in chapter 16, our text for today, Jesus only points us to the Holy Spirit as the Counselor, who comes by our side, as One who says what we need to hear and reveals things we could never know.

The disciples were saddened by Jesus' talk of departure, so saddened that they didn't even want to talk about it. They ignored it at all cost. Jesus didn't want this conversation to die. He said, 'Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth: It is good for you that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.' There's a progression here, isn't there? Jesus has to go for Him to come. It's the only way He can come, if Jesus goes.

Why is that? It wasn't a matter of two people not being able to be at the same place at the same time. But if Jesus didn't go, then the Holy Spirit wouldn't have had anything to talk about. What good would the flames or the wind be but a sideshow magic act if they had no message to go with it. If Jesus hadn't died, their sins wouldn't have been paid for. If Jesus hadn't risen, there would be no resurrection from the dead. What good would it be for us to know that Jesus walked on water or healed the sick or raised the dead if we have NO forgiveness and no hope for ourselves? Jesus HAD TO go, for the Holy Spirit to come, right?

When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment. First of all, we might note that the Holy Spirit doesn't come with "opinions" or "thoughts" or "suggestions." He comes to convict. God's Word is truth, and there's no arguing your way out of it, especially on Judgment Day. Either you're on the side of truth or you're not. You can't be wishy-washy when it

comes to these truths. They aren't generic types of cliches that mean basically nothing.

The Holy Spirit was sent to convict about sin. This is an amazing thing if you think about it. What's the one main sin that the Holy Spirit is being sent to convict people of? It's not murder. It's not adultery. All those sins have been convicted from the time of Moses, and even before within the human heart. But what's the ONE sin that the Holy Spirit will condemn? It's unbelief, specifically those who don't believe in Jesus. So when Peter preached at Pentecost, he mentioned how they killed God in the flesh! But that wasn't even something that would damn them, in the sense that God wanted Him to go to the cross. The only thing that would condemn them would be if they rejected Him after having risen from the dead and offered them a free and full forgiveness. That's it!

Think about what Jesus says in Mark 3:28–29: “I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.” Did you catch the first verse there? **ALL SINS AND BLASPHEMIES WILL BE FORGIVEN** them. That's an incredible statement. When Jesus died, He died for every sin. You and I sin every day. We are sinning machines. Even our prayers and lack thereof are filled with sin in some sense. But those are all forgiven. Everything is forgiven that we do as Christians too! We need that forgiveness, don't we? And even the blasphemies that people spoke against Him, calling Him a demon-possessed man and a lunatic, those were paid for on the cross too. What a beautiful promise verse 38 is!

There's only one sin that isn't forgiven, and that's the sin against the Holy Spirit. But what is that sin? The Holy Spirit's role is to enable us to cling to Jesus as our righteousness and our salvation. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to convict the world about righteousness. The Holy Spirit points us to Jesus in the heavens and says, “Cling to Him as your Savior. He has accomplished your salvation. He has died for your sins. He has risen from the dead. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. If you believe in Him and are baptized, you will be saved!” How do you sin against the Holy Spirit? You say, “I don't want that! I don't believe that! I don't need that. If there's a heaven, I can get there just fine by myself. I'm not going to believe in this Jesus any more than I would believe in a flying spaghetti monster.” Out of all of the sins that are so offensive to our holy God, the one sin that ultimately condemns people is Unbelief.

The Holy Spirit's role is to remind us of something important. He has been sent to "convict the world about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned." Don't forget who gets the final say. Don't forget what has already happened to Satan. When Jesus died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead, this is the final say of God. Sin has been paid for. Salvation has been procured. God has declared that the way of salvation is only through faith in Him. No matter what Satan has been saying and how he has been objecting to this truth, he will have nothing to say on Judgment Day. Those who refuse to repent will have their Day in court. When Jesus comes on Judgment Day, He will call us to the pleasures of heaven and give us brand new bodies to live in eternity with Him. Nothing can stop Jesus from doing this, not even the prince of hell. The Holy Spirit has to remind us of this: God's Word is true. We don't have to play God. We don't have to be the judge and jury, because God's judgments are right. God is the judge. Don't be intimidated by Satan's condemnation of the truth; Satan doesn't know what truth is! Listen to the Holy Spirit's convictions; these are God's convictions.

Let's take this back to Pentecost again, and think about this wonderful promise that Jesus gave to His disciples. With the disciples, it may have seemed so much less to them to receive the Holy Spirit, but it was so much more. It wasn't either/or. By giving them the Holy Spirit, Jesus was giving them Himself for Eternity!

Jesus is saying to us, "I'm giving you an invisible gift, the gift of a Person, the Holy Spirit. You can't see Him. You can't touch Him. But He can touch you. He will open your mind, to see Me through the eyes of faith. When I give you Him, I also give you ME! He will enable you to run behind the cross and find full forgiveness and holiness. He will assure you that I am in control and working all things for your good. He will strengthen you and comfort you in the most trying times of your life. You won't even let the fear of death consume you! He will continue to be with you, as long as you stay in the Word. He can't be kept out by jail cells. He can't be killed with chemotherapy. He won't go running out when you question Him or doubt Him. He won't beat you or abuse you. He will never be quiet as long as you keep listening to the Word." What a precious gift this invisible Person is! It is more precious than gold, this gift of the Holy Spirit, because of what He says to us, how He connects us to Jesus and He keeps us connected to Jesus!

About 3,000 people were added to the church that day as they were baptized and believed in the words that Peter and the disciples spoke to them about Jesus. What

a gift to them! Through simple words and water the Holy Spirit united them together, people from all over the country, under the blood and righteousness of Jesus. Pentecost still happens today through the same words and the same water, and the Holy Spirit unites us too! What a gift to us too! Without the Holy Spirit, we couldn't have Jesus, and if we didn't have Jesus, then we wouldn't be forgiven, and we wouldn't be in heaven. But with the Holy Spirit, we have Jesus, forgiveness, faith, peace, hope, and salvation. Some day, when Jesus comes again, we will all be united in heaven. What a wonderful gift, the gift of Pentecost, the gift of the Spirit, the gift that keeps on giving forgiveness, holiness, life and salvation in Jesus, much more than we ever deserved.

Amen.