

God Pours Out His Gift

June 4, 2017 | Pentecost Sunday

Joel 2:28-29

“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.”

Imagine one day, that you have a stranger standing on your door step. He greets you with a smile and tells you you are the beneficiary of a wealthy aristocrat who has included you in his will. The man offers you a check with your name on it, for several thousand dollars. Do you take it? The thoughts you are sorting through right now are exactly what 70 random people in Lisbon Portugal were feeling in 2007 when they were told exactly the same thing. But it wasn't a scam or a prank, it was real and the check they were offered was real. The wealthy aristocrat Luis Carlos Cabral de Camara, with no living relatives or friends, opened a phone book and selected 70 names at random. These total strangers, became his sole heirs... and it was up to one lawyer to spread the news.

Each member of the Trinity has a specific role they play in your salvation. The Son, Jesus Christ, earned a limitless fortune through His perfect life, so that upon His death on the cross He had earned enough that the entire world would benefit. The Father witnessed, accepted, and approved Jesus' last will and testament by raising Jesus from the dead, and now the Holy Spirit is the messenger who delivers the wonderful news of Jesus' life death and resurrection to the doorstep of our hearts.

I. On all flesh

Sometimes, I find, I get lost in the crowd. “All” is a term we use to include everyone, but sometimes its easy to forget that it also includes me. When there are public service announcements for all, its easy to think, “everyone accept me.” So you see signs for “don't drive distracted” that means everyone accept me, because I know how to drive responsibly with a cell phone...

Here is a case where the Bible uses “all.” God promises through the prophet Joel that He will pour out His Spirit, or the Holy Spirit on all people. Or better yet, in the Hebrew it says “on all flesh.” Whenever the Bible uses that term “flesh” it wants you to think “sinful flesh” that as Paul says in Galatians 5:17 “desires what is contrary to the Spirit.” A great example of how God feels about all sinful human flesh is in Genesis 6:3, right before God sends a global flood to wipe out and destroy all sinful flesh He says, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh” (NKJV). Because all have sinned and have fallen short of God's glory, we are all sinful flesh and that means one day there will be another judgment—a judgment day that the prophet Joel describes in detail surrounding these verses: “The sun will turn to darkness and the moon will turn to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (2:31). All flesh will have to be judged. And if all flesh has to stand in judgment before the Lord, then I will have to stand before the Lord. My sinful deeds of the flesh will be exposed before the Holy and perfect judge of Heaven and earth.

But before that happens, before God pours out judgment and fire, there will be another outpouring—the good kind. God will pour out His Spirit, or the Holy Spirit upon all sinful rebellious human flesh. This is the message that Pentecost Sunday celebrates, that the Holy Spirit brings good news, that Jesus became “the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering” (Romans 8:3). So because of Jesus, the Bible takes that little word “all” and turns it around—now instead of “all are guilty” now because of Jesus the message is “all are declared not guilty” for Christ died for all. Now instead of all are condemned, the Holy Spirit comforts us with the message “all are forgiven.” And if all are forgiven, that means I am forgiven.

And when it comes to delivering this wonderful message, God promises that He won’t just give this good news to a select few, not 70 random strangers, but for all people. This statement includes all members of the human race. The prophet Joel uses every extreme to encompass every member of the human race—males, females, old and young, slaves and free. Every kind of division, race, social standing, “gender identity” is included. God will keep His promise to pour out the Holy Spirit on all flesh, so that everyone is without excuse on judgment day... If ever you find yourself wondering, doubting, “how could all people of every nation, for each generation possibly hear the Good News?” Then its time to start supporting mission work; engage in sending missionaries so that the Holy Spirit can continue spreading the wonderful news of our Redemption through Jesus Christ.

II. That by His Grace we receive it

It is a common mistake though, to confuse exactly what the Gift of the Holy Spirit is. In this passage from Joel, God’s gift of the Holy Spirit seems to come with the promise of prophecy, dreaming dreams, and visions. Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven the the Holy Spirit was poured out on Jesus’ followers, they were able to speak fluently in different languages. A sad result of over emphasizing these minor “gifts” makes people question whether or not they have the Holy Spirit at all.

In Numbers chapter 12:6, the Lord says, “When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.” But it is important to understand how this statement fits into the timeline of God’s revealed will. God came to prophets through dreams and visions in a time *before* much of the Bible had been written, and the parts that were had not yet been collected into one coherent document or book that everyone has on their nightstand at home. So in a time before every home, child, and person had easy and open access to God’s Word, it was sometimes necessary for God to reveal that same exact Word through visions and dreams. Now the Holy Spirit connects all of His promises and gifts to the written and spoken Word of God, for “Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). Faith is the true and greatest gift of the Holy Spirit, and that comes through so clearly on Pentecost Sunday.

You see, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all Jesus’ disciples, the true miracle wasn’t the sound of the wind, or the tongues of flames, or even speaking in different languages—the true miracle was that the disciples finally understood the Gospel; they understood

Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was meant for them personally. Understanding God's message moved them to such a point that Peter could stand and give a sermon on the spot! All the other minor gifts of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, performing miracles, that had been given in that unique time and place were given in service to the preaching of the Gospel, so that the one true gift of the Spirit could be received. God has given each of us a rich measure of His Spirit—He has equipped us with exactly what we need to share that gift with others. You don't need the gift of tongues, or miracles, prophecy, or visions. The Holy Spirit has given you the gifts you need: charity, love, boldness, kindness—gifts that enable us to simply invite people to come and hear God's message of saving grace through Jesus Christ. Its neat to think that God is still fulfilling this prophecy through the prophet Joel from all those years ago: through you, through your witness, God is still pouring out His Spirit on the World today.

As you can probably imagine, of those 70 strangers included in Camara's will, most of them thought the news was too good to be true... they thought they were being scammed. The lawyer standing at the door with a smile on his face, a check in hand with their name on it, had many doors slammed in his face. However, today we celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit. Not only has he brought to each of us the gift of salvation the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, but He has also worked in each of our hearts the belief and trust that the check is real, He makes us want the gift, cherish it, and above all, to recognize that your name is written on the check. It was meant for you. Amen.