

Pentecost: Proclaiming the Wonderful Works of God – Acts 2:11

Introduction – After Jesus ascended, the disciples returned to Jerusalem (Acts 1:12) and stayed in an upper room (not unlike a meeting hall over a large home). Obeying Jesus' final words, they remained there waiting for the Holy Spirit. They were in one accord and gave themselves to prayer (v13). Besides the eleven there were about a hundred and twenty in their midst (v15). Outside of that place, as the Feast of Pentecost approached, thousands of Jews from all over the known world who were able to come were filling the city and preparing for the feast day. Some may have heard the rumors of an itinerant Rabbi who claimed to be the Messiah and who recently had been put to death by the Romans, crucified like a common criminal. The rumors had continued with multiple testimonies of sightings of this Rabbi and declarations that he had risen from the dead. But his disciples seemed to all be gone – in hiding – maybe for fear of the Jewish authorities.

Sometime before 9AM on that Pentecost morning, there was a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind coming from that house (2:1-2, 15) – most likely not far from the temple courts. It was so loud and strange that hundreds and then thousands swarmed around this house to see what was going on. The disciples stepped out and the crowd discovered that these Galileans were able to speak in all the diverse languages of the crowd. And what was it they were proclaiming? The wonderful works of God (v11).

The Sword of the Spirit – So what was happening? *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (2:4). The ability to speak in tongues was a sign of the reversal of the curse at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), a sign of judgment upon unbelieving Israel (Isaiah 28:11-12, 1 Cor 14:21-22), and a proclamation of the kingship of Jesus over all the world (Psalm 2:8, Matt 28:18, Rev 7:9). What they were saying in those languages, by definition, were words of the Spirit, the words of God.

Paul tells us all to take up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph 6:17), and of course, Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1-3). This Word is a sword coming out of His mouth (Rev 19:15) and with it He strikes the nations. This is an offensive, aggressive, and unrelenting attack upon unbelieving hearts. It is living, powerful, and it cuts deep (Heb 4:12-13). And that is exactly what it did at Pentecost as Peter preached (Acts 2:37).

The Wonderful Works of God – The word translated *"wonderful works"* is used only one other time in the New Testament, translated *"great things"* in the Song of Mary (Luke 1:49) and hers is no sweet worship tune (Luke 1:46-55). The great things that God has done, Mary sang, were the exaltations of the lowly, those who fear God, and the scattering of the proud, trusting in their might or riches and turning a blind eye to the Lord. Every phrase of her song is connected to prophecies in the Old Testament of a Messiah would come to deliver, but also would come and judge the hypocrites and those who rebelled against Him. Nevertheless, the song drips with mercy and promises to *"Abraham and to his seed forever"* (v55). And pressing back further, what were those promises to Abraham? *"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Gen 12:2-3). The blessing of all the families of the earth began that day when from out of that group representing the nations, *"about three thousand souls were added to them"* (Acts 2:41). Old Testament Pentecost was *"the Feast of Harvest"* (Exod 23:16) where the firstfruits of the first harvest were gathered in. On Pentecost Day, 30AD, the Lord put in His sickle and began His great harvest (Rev 14:14-16).

When the Sword of the Spirit is Unleashed – We need an optimistic, biblical view of the *"wonderful works of God"* brought forth in the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is called the sword of the Spirit because the affect is the work of the Spirit and not of man (John 3:8). It is called the Word of God because when the proclamation is a work of the Spirit the dead heart hears the voice of Jesus (Rom 10:17, John 10:16) and comes to life. That Word is then placed in our hearts by the Spirit over and over, He fills us with it, and out comes more Words (Col 3:16, Psalm 95:2). The Word goes forth like rain and the ground cannot stop it, the earth brings forth bud, seed, and bread. *"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it"* (Isaiah 55:10-11). Even when His sovereign purpose is to shut ears in judgment, His Word perfectly accomplishes what the Lord intends (Matt 13:14-17).

The White Fields that Didn't Know They Were Ready – The three thousand souls saved that Pentecost Day did not get up that morning thinking they were going to be saved. Saul thought he was doing righteous works when he was struck down and then lifted to salvation (Acts 9). The Samaritan woman that Jesus met at the well just thought she was getting a bucket of water only to find out she would drink from a well where she would never thirst again (John 4). In that passage Jesus tells the disciples to look out and see the world as a field white for harvest (John 4:35-38). And the harvest has grown and grown ever since, for somewhere near 2000 years. He is not finished (Rev 7:9-10, Isaiah 11:9).

Do you know the "*wonderful works*" of God, the "*great things*" He has done? Do you know those works God has done for you in and through Jesus Christ and for this sorry world? Having been harvested, can you look around you with eyes of faith and see those around you who have no idea that they are ready for reaping? And here you are with a sickle in your hand. Who can you specifically pray for? Who can you unashamedly give the truth of Jesus? Who could you invite to come and join in the worship of the God of these great works? Jesus says they are out there. In fact, He brought them right into your life.

Dave Hatcher – Pentecost, June 9, 2019