

LENTEN MIDWEEK 1
MARCH 13, 2019
ACTS 2:1-4
JOHN 14:16-17, 25-26

Gathered By the Holy Spirit

As I said last week, our theme for this season of Lent is, “We are the church together.” It is my hope and my prayer that through this season of Lent we will draw closer to each other in this congregation as well as with the rest of the body of Christ. We begin this series with the basic teachings of our faith as Lutherans. Through the Gospel and the Sacraments, the Spirit nourishes, preserves, and increases the Church and its members. In his explanation of the Third Article of the Creed, Martin Luther details the Spirit’s work:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

As we read these words today we see that the followers of Jesus Christ were worshipping. They were gathered as the community of the Way. They would later be called Christians. They were gathered in one body. The Holy Spirit came to them as they worshipped and as they were in prayer. The Holy Spirit came with tongues of fire and gave each the ability to speak so that others could understand. The apostles spoke the word of the Lord and the people

around them understood the message. Of course, there were various ways the people responded but they all understood what was being spoken. They all heard the same words as they were spoken. They each had a reaction to those words.

We gather today. We come to hear and understand. But we also gather as the community and body of Christ. We are united by the Holy Spirit. We all hear the same words preached from this preacher's mouth. We hear the preaching but each of us understands as the Lord gives ability to understand. Our ability to understand is tied to our willingness to be formed by the word of the Lord. If we do not want to hear the word of the Lord or if we regard it as nonsense we will not have the ability to understand as the Lord intended. In the reading from Acts 2 many heard the message, but some chose to not allow the word of the Lord to shape their lives. They heard the words from Peter and the others, but they mocked them saying, "They are filled with new wine." They mocked and made fun because they were not part of the community of Christ. They were closed by the what scripture often calls, "hardness of heart." Many others became believers on that day of Pentecost. They believed because the apostles proclaimed the word in ways they could understand each in their own language. They believed and became part of the community of believers united by Christ and gathered by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gathers us today and the Spirit teaches us in ways that touch our lives. For some it means retreat or running away. We retreat to a comfortable place. When the Holy Spirit moves us, we might become uncomfortable. We are uncomfortable because when God touches us we cannot remain as we are. We flee from the spirit so we will not be so uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit of God is not bound by space and time. We cannot hide from God. When we allow the spirit to move us we see the fruits of our faith. We see good things in our lives and in our church and we have greater knowledge of God. The Lord shapes us by the Holy Spirit and we bear witness

to the truth. The Holy Spirit testifies in and through us so that we can testify about our relationship with the Lord Jesus.

John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit. He said that our Advocate, Counselor, Helper, and Intercessor would come to lead us into the truth. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we can see the Father. We can know the Son and we can do great things. Jesus says that because he returns to the Father and sends the Holy Spirit we would do even greater things. Those greater things Jesus talks about are reaching out in love for those we may not agree with it. It is sending missionaries to our enemies hoping they will also come to know the Father. The “greater things” means seeking to do the Lord’s work because that work is there to be done. The Holy Spirit has come and is teaching us everything. The Holy Spirit has come and we are gathered because of the Spirit. We worship and praise God. We offer prayers of thanksgiving, praise and intercession as the Holy Spirit moves us. As we worship and work together we also learn together and we grow together. We listen to the word of the Lord and know that God is speaking to us through the Holy Spirit that has come to us.

We are the body of Christ. We have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to minister to God’s people. We are the church. AMEN