

## The Greatest Upgrade: Sermon for Pentecost Sunday

### Reading Acts 2:1- 21

### Sermon

In the last 10 days, many of us have joined our brothers and sisters all around the world praying for God's Kingdom to come. Today marks the end of this Novena and we will be joining others virtually in a service to conclude these prayers. Today is also Pentecost Sunday and our readings from Acts: 1-21 explains to us what happened on this very important day.

Could I encourage you now to find your Bible and open with me to the Book of Acts of the Apostles chapter 2?

The reading starts with the statement, "**when the day of Pentecost came**". What exactly was the day of Pentecost? I can almost hear you say the day the Holy Spirit came down! Or the day the church was born, or better still the day the Holy Spirit descended like flames on the disciples and they spoke in tongues. All these answers are of course correct, but to the early Christians, to the first readers of Luke's account, Pentecost was much more than these.

Pentecost, as the name implies is also 50 days after the Passover Feast. It is the day for what was called the Festival of Weeks. It was one of the three great festivals in Jewish worship, coming between Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, and in Jesus' day it remained one of the three festivals which included pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Pentecost concluded the Feast of Weeks, which began with a day for the offering of first fruits on the first Sabbath after Passover (Lev. 23:10-11), and ended fifty days later, with what came to be known as the primary celebration of first fruits (Num. 28:26, Lev. 23:17). *First fruits were offered both as a thanksgiving for the faithfulness of God in the past, a celebration of God's provision in the present, and as a promising sign of the future harvest which was to come.*

It is no wonder that there were many people in Jerusalem from various parts of the world. As Luke wrote in verse 5 of our reading:

*"Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven". Acts 2:5*

They were there to worship and offer their offerings. **Bear this in mind as I will come back to the subject of fruits later on.** To the early Christians and of course to us Pentecost was the outpouring of God's Spirit on His people. This was remarkable and has been well documented but in fact this was not the first time that God's Spirit has fallen on His people.

The Old Testament is filled with various instances of people, especially Prophets filled with the Holy Spirit. Joshua in Num. 27:18, Othniel in Judges 3:10, Gideon in Judges 6:34, Samson Judges 13:25; 14:6, and Saul (1 Sam. 10:9, 10). However, the Spirit later departed from Saul because of his disobedience (16:14).

The Holy Spirit could also be seen at work in the New Testament before Pentecost. Remember the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came like a dove and even after His resurrection, when he appeared to the disciples, the Bible tells us in John 22: 10

**“And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit”**

This shows clearly that they disciple have been filled with the Holy Spirit even before Pentecost!

What on earth happened at Pentecost? I want to use the following stories to try and explain what I believe happened at Pentecost.

A couple of year ago, I went to a trip to Nigeria. As usual, I flew Economy Class. It was on one of the higher quality airlines. The food was not the best, the leg room was too small, the man sitting beside me was taking so much space while at the same time, and he snored as he slept. Although this was not the best of arrangements, I was still glad I was on the plane and going home. On my way back, I had a completely different experience. I checked into the plane, hoping whoever is beside me does not take up so much place or snore as they sleep! Just before take-off, one of the Hostesses came up to me and asked if I could come with her. I thought I might have done something wrong or sat in the wrong place! She took me to the First Class area, gave me a new seat, much more comfortable and introduced me to another air hostess, who I am told will personally take care of me and will be at my beck and call. I asked why and she told me that they have been told that I came to Nigeria for bury my father and they will be glad to take care of me on this flight. You can only imagine what my emotions were at that time; my eyes welled up with tears. I looked around me and immediately realised the difference between the Economy and the First Class. I am sure many of us have had a similar experience of being upgraded. If you haven't, I pray you will have one soon.

As good as this experience is, it was just a one off. I am not expecting to be upgraded all the time (although I wish!). Same way was the experience of the Jewish people in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit was occasional. It was not for everyone. Just like being upgraded to First Class cannot be done for everyone! It was for a selected few and these were often called Prophets.

My second story is almost the opposite of the first. A couple of years back, many of us would remember what the telephone looks like. You might remember that not all households have one. To make a call you might have to go to the phone box on the street corner. If you are fortunate enough to have one at home, the number of calls you can make or receive is limited. Today, there are not just telephones in every household, there are mobile phones.

You could check your emails on your phones; take pictures, do video phones. The telephone services have been upgraded that you can now almost spend as much time as you want on the phone receiving and making calls! The time before Pentecost, is like those days, when telephones were rear and seen as luxuries. Today telephones are necessities.

What happened on the day of Pentecost was that God upgraded our telephones! He upgraded our means of communication with him. From Pentecost, direct access to God has been open to everyone. Everyone now has a direct line to God. Everyone is now able to travel first class. Everyone is able to say Abba Father!

You may want to ask why God decided to pour out His Spirit on this special day! The Festival of Pentecost already existed in Jewish worship. It was a time of fruits offering and God decided to offer His people free seeds. This was the understanding of the disciples and the early Christians. This is why often the Paul speaks of the fruits of the Spirit.

In Romans 12:6-8 he wrote, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully".

So what is Pentecost? Pentecost is the day we were all upgraded unto the supersonic first-class communication mode with God. It is the day; we were all given news seeds. Pentecost is not a one off event that happened and has stopped. Pentecost is a general reboot of human kind. Pentecost is you and I been upgraded to first class travel on God Airways.

Pentecost is an invitation to come and travel with God. Are you ready? Have you received the seeds? Are you bearing the fruits? Today is another day for each of us to ask for more if we already have it or ask for it afresh if we don't.

Please if you can, say this prayer written by St Augustine,

"Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy. Strengthen me, Holy Spirit that I may defend all that is holy. Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy. Amen