

Value Pentecost!

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[0 : 0 0] Today, as I said, we are going to look at the meaning of Pentecost in more detail. And I just want to remind us again that we have other important days in the Christian calendar! That is very much foundational events.

For instance, we have Christmas, where we celebrate the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And then we have the Good Friday, when we have the Atonement death of Jesus at the cross.

And we also then, on Easter Sunday, celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Then, forty days later, we have the Ascension Day.

And then, the Ascension Day already hasn't got all the emphasis that we kind of allow for the other days to have, when Jesus went back to heaven.

And then, ten days after that, we have Pentecost Day. And I do get the feeling often that while we really understand and celebrate the other days, but when it comes to, especially the Pentecost Day, then all of a sudden, it's not as highly on the agenda anymore.

[1 : 3 6] It's not enough theological depth that we focus when we come to Pentecost. I remember back in South Africa, on the Ascension Day, it was still a holiday, a public holiday.

But even that has changed now. And I don't think it's a holiday here. Even on Friday, I'm not sure whether it is generally perceived as a public holiday, because the world has become so secularized, moving away from the original Christian Western tradition.

Now, another reason for, apart from being more secularized, another reason for, maybe within the church, the hesitation to really celebrate Pentecost might be that it kind of reminds us of personal, subjective things.

All the other days is about Jesus. He came on Christmas, incarnation. He died on the cross. He was raised again. He went to heaven.

But all of a sudden, His Spirit starts working in us, and it becomes a little bit more subjective. And when it's a little bit more subjective, we are getting afraid maybe that we will experience subjectively emotions.

[3 : 0 3] It will take control of our lives, and we will behave in public in a way that might embarrass me, and things like that. And I think that kind of fear might be one of the reasons why often people are white, especially in the more reformed tradition, worried about the Holy Spirit.

I remember, again, back in South Africa, many combined services we had with the more charismatic churches. And I had a very good colleague in one of these extremely charismatic churches.

And when we have a combined service, he used to tell his members of the congregation, we are going to the Dutch Reformed Church. We are going to the Dutch Reformed Church. It's the Reformed Church. You must behave yourself.

Don't start speaking in tongues and stuff like that. So, anyway, that kind of extraordinary things. Now, I want to say, although those things have their place in our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit, I don't think that is the main focus.

And I want to compare it with something like this. If, perhaps, you are on holiday, and you went to Spain, you sit there.

[4 : 25] I mean, I've never experienced that in Spain, but let's say you are sitting there and you are watching over the ocean, and on a sunset you see this big, beautiful ball of sun setting behind the horizon.

And you might, because you relax, you are on holiday, you are in awe, and you might say, what a wonderful creation that God has created.

I'm struggling with this thing. I'm not used to it. I'm not used to it. I'm not a celebrity, as they tried to say when I was standing there in the door. Anyway, so you have this wonderful experience.

You become even aware of God's work and the way of God's work. You are a very wonderful experience.

But a week later, you are back in Scotland. I don't want to make the obvious joke whether you don't see the sun anyway, but there I did it. But here you are back in Scotland, and you are back at work.

[5 : 33] You don't have time to sit and watch the sun rise or set because you are not on holiday. And let me tell you, whether you are aware of the sun or notice the sun or stand there in awe, the sun continues to work every day.

Not only when you are in Spain enjoying a holiday, because without the sun there will not be life on this earth. Physical life. And that is, I think, what we need to understand when we talk about the Holy Spirit.

There is a place for that subjective awareness and experience. It's way more than that. It's way more than that. And that is what I want to focus on today.

That the main purpose, and we are going to look later on at Paul's letter to the Romans. The main purpose of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily to have all these extraordinary experiences.

The main purpose is to understand the righteousness of God. To have a new understanding. Paul is writing in Romans 12, where he is saying, we have to renew, we have to be able to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

[6 : 53] The main purpose of the Holy Spirit is to help us see differently and think differently. A new lens through which we look at this world.

And what is it that we are supposed to see? We are supposed to see the righteousness of God. And what is the righteousness of God? That is Jesus Christ, his Son, who came for our salvation.

And so I want to then therefore revisit, just taking a quick look at Paul's letter to the Romans.

Romans chapters 1 to 3 is the first, the problem here. This is what Paul is explaining to the readers.

It is the problem of universal sin and condemnation. Now again, can I just remind you again. The early disciples and followers of Jesus were Jews.

[8 : 02] And so they were circumcised. They had the law. And all of a sudden this new Jewish movement allowed people outside the Jewish community, Gentiles, to join.

But they are not circumcised. They didn't follow the law. And there were a bit of people upset about it. We are Jews. We are circumcised. How can they just come into this whole new movement and just be saved by all of that?

Or by nothing of it? And this is what Paul is then explaining to them in the first three chapters of Romans. His letter to the Romans. In the first place.

He is explaining to them that the law was given to the Jews very explicitly, explaining to the Jews what they are supposed to do to have a right relationship with God.

But the law wasn't able to help them to do it. But the law wasn't able to help them to do it. They have tried and yet they fell short of it. So they were in no better position than the Gentiles.

[9 : 21] Now the Gentiles, Paul is saying, and that is that verses from the second chapter that was read to us. There Paul is saying, the Gentiles, although they didn't have the law, but what was written on their hearts was the requirements of the law.

So somehow they kind of sense, all human beings created in God's image have this written law, a sense of what is right and what is wrong.

But they were not able to be always doing the right thing, the good thing that is expected. So whether you have the explicit law given to Moses, to the Jewish people, or whether it's that written law in their hearts, none of these were able to bring people in the right relationship with the law.

And this is when Paul is now saying, going to the second part of the letter, the solution to this problem is the law can't do it.

Whether it's written in your heart or the explicit law, the Jewish law. So what is the solution then? The solution is, Jesus Christ, or Jesus was sent as the Christ, as the Messiah, to fulfill on our behalf, Jews and Gentiles.

[10 : 51] So nobody else approves position, according to Paul. So for Jews and Gentiles, Jesus is the one. And then he is saying there in chapter 3, verse 21, But now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made known.

Apart from the law. Whether it's the Jewish law or the one written in your heart, the righteousness, how to be in the right place with God, has been made known. And that is that Jesus is the Messiah and our Savior.

None beyond that. So, this is now available for Jews and for Gentiles. And that was the big issue. But nevertheless, the Jews were not privileged in that sense.

It's now available for them all. But the question is, how do we get that righteousness of God? How can we get to a point that it is reckoned for us to be saved because of what Jesus did?

And that is where faith and belief comes in. That is trust. So it's all about the trust that we have to have in God and in what he has revealed in Jesus.

[12 : 09] And this is what Paul is then saying in Romans chapter 4. He's talking about Abram again trying to explain to the people in Rome that before there was an explicit law, before there was circumcision, God approached Abram and made promises to Abram.

And then Abram trusted God. He accepted these things. He believed God. And only then Abram was circumcised after that.

So, again, what Paul is trying to say, it's neither the explicit law of the Jews nor the law written on the hearts of the Gentiles.

Salvation, the righteousness of God, is being revealed in Christ. And we can only trust that he is our savior.

Only then we are saved. Only then that righteousness achieved by him will become part of our lives and we are saved. So it's there, available for Jews and Gentiles and for us.

[13 : 24] And then the biggest question for us is to decide how do we then get that. And this is where the Holy Spirit, that is the role of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is that divine agent, if I can put it like that. But the Holy Spirit is God himself in the third person, coming to people and open their eyes.

Make them understand in a new way that this Jesus, as I said, many Jews were named Jesus. But this Jesus was not just any Jew with the name of Jesus.

He was the Messiah. You can't see that. You can't understand that. Unless the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to understand that that is God's plan for you and me.

That is God's work. To bring that faith. To create that trust in me and you. So if you are sitting here this morning, and you are sitting here, and you celebrate Christmas because you believe in Christ, the Incarnated One.

[14 : 35] You celebrate Good Friday, Easter Sunday. You believe in Christ's ascension into heaven.

Why do you believe all these things? How come that you recognize Jesus as God's Son and Savior? It is because the Holy Spirit enabled you to do it.

Now maybe it was at one point in your time when you were sitting at the sun in Spain, and you were really impressed and thrilled. Maybe, maybe it was a more gentle wind that was blowing.

You were sitting and you'd start realizing this is genuine, true. Jesus is your Messiah. And for many days you don't even experience that anymore.

But you don't see the sunset sunrise because you are busy with your daily life. But the Spirit, like the sun, is constantly working away in your heart, in my heart.

[15 : 38] And so there are many people outside this building, the church, that don't believe it. When you say Jesus is the Messiah, they will say, well, Jesus, but the Messiah, God, Incarnated, that doesn't make sense, died but raised again.

They can't accept it. And no matter how much you are going to explain to them or try to argue with them, you will not convince them. We have to witness.

We have to live according to this new life. And God might use it. But until the Holy Spirit is going to change that person's frame of reference, way of looking, nothing is going to happen.

That is the work that the Spirit is doing. It is that transformation that is only possible because of what the Spirit is doing.

But I want to then just quickly go to some of the other verses as well. Pardon me. And I know we are running out of time, so we're trying to be very quickly.

[16 : 50] Now that we have this new understanding, you and I, we trust Jesus, we trust God that Jesus is the righteousness. There are many other things that the Holy Spirit is teaching us as well, enabling us to understand even better, even every day.

And still today, maybe you are a Christian for quite a long time. And then you still read scripture and an old verse just speaks to you in a fresh way.

That is still the work of the Holy Spirit ongoing in you and me. And it will not be finished until he will come again. But these other things that the Holy Spirit is continuing to do in our lives, I want to quickly go through that.

And that is where Paul is saying in chapter 8 verses 1 to 4, he says in chapter 1, I mean in verse 1, Therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now this is not wishful thinking. I hope I will not be condemned. This is actually a declaration. We are here. We believe.

[18 : 07] Why do we believe? Why did we accept that? It was the work of the Holy Spirit. Not because we are clever. It was the work of the Holy Spirit. And now there is no condemnation.

It is a reality. It is a declaration. You and I are free in Christ. Verse 2, Because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit who gives life, has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Remember, before the Holy Spirit, we were under the law, whether it was the explicit law or the law written on our hearts, because we were not saved. But the Holy Spirit has opened our eyes.

That doesn't mean we are perfect. That doesn't mean we have a complete obedience. But we are living with a new law. The law of the Spirit that dwells in us. And then verse 3, For what the law was powerless to do.

The law was given, but it couldn't change the human being. God did by sending his own Son. And then verse 4, So that the righteousness requirement of the law might be fully met in us.

[19 : 16] In us. Because the Holy Spirit brought it into us. It's now met in us. Not by us, but by Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Who do not live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

We are believers. So the Spirit dwells within us. We live this new life. And this new understanding. The Spirit lives in us.

Verses 9 to 11. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh. Just the realm. You understand? You are not still in the old dispensation.

You are in the realm of the Spirit indeed. If indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Verse, the next one. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

That is a very sobering thing. But on the other hand, a very comforting thing. You believe in Jesus. You celebrate Christmas, Easter.

[20 : 18] Why is that possible? That you trust Him? Because Christ, because the Spirit is dwelling in you. You are a Christian because you have the Spirit.

Without that, it is not possible. So rest assured that the Spirit lives within you. Verse 10. But if Christ is in you, your Spirit is alive because of righteousness.

We have a new Spirit, a new life in us. Verse 11. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He will also give you life to your mortal body.

So the Spirit in us will dead our own spirit because of sin. But our spirit has been renewed. And our bodies will be renewed as well in the same sense.

Like Jesus only was after He comes again. And then verses 14 to 17. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

[21 : 19] That is what the Spirit is helping us to understand more and more. We are not just anybody. We are a child. That is our new dispensation. Verse 15. The Spirit you receive does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again.

Rather the Spirit you receive brought about your adoption. We are children of God. All these many realities that is now true of us.

And there my screen is going haywire but I am back again. And then verse 16. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

A confirmation. And then verse 17. Now if we are children then we are heirs. Heirs of God. Heirs of Christ. So can I just say.

All the promises that were made to Jesus. Is now our promises as well. We are saved. We are made right with God.

[22 : 22] We will be raised again. We have eternal life. We will always be with God. And God's Spirit is already with us.

All the time. So can I just come bring this to an end by saying. It's important to celebrate Christmas incarnation.

And Good Friday. And Easter Sunday. And the Ascension Day. Day. But don't think that Pentecost Day is an add on.

Don't think that the Holy Spirit is just a little bit extra. without the Spirit, or it is the completion of God's salvation plan for you and me, when the Spirit was poured out, because it was the Spirit that brought you and me and the people that 3,000 to faith, to trust, to accept the righteousness of God as revealed in Christ, which was not possible to accept if it wasn't for the work of the Spirit.

And therefore, we have to celebrate even Pentecost with the same theological seriousness and all the other days. He is at work.

[23 : 44] He continues to work in us all the time. Let us.