

# Pentecost

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I'm reading this morning, verses 36-47, and I'm reading from the NIV. Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this.

! God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.! When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call.

With many other words he warned them, and he pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation. Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

[ 1 : 1 8 ] All the believers were together, and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

They brought bread in their homes, and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God, and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Amen. Thank you, Karen, for your prayers. Thank you all. You might remember I said this last week.

You know, we've got this box of lovely Bibles at the front door. And if you find yourself without a Bible, home or a church, feel free to take one.

Take it home and ponder over it and read it. And while you're in church, if you haven't got a Bible with you, feel free to grab one and use it as well, of course.

[ 2 : 2 6 ] But as I say, feel free to take one home as well. Holy Bible. So, company, companionship, community, friendship.

We all love it. Some more than others. Some like it maybe once a week or so. Others every day. In the early 90s, a couple of writers, David Crane and Marta Kaufman, teamed up to try and find a gap on TV where they could create a show that would take the world by storm.

They searched, researched, looked, asked, wondered, and finally got it. NBC and Warner Brothers bought into it.

And September 22nd, 1994, launched it off. And it was an overnight sensation. It became the biggest and most watched TV program ever and still today ranks in second place under Hunger Games.

And the reason why was, is because it was exactly what everyone across the globe, from all nations, from all cultures, wants and needs.

[ 4 : 08 ] It, of course, could only be friends. I had a lecture from a university professor about this at Bible College. The creators of friends purposely, thoroughly, look for the one thing people always want.

For the one thing people always need, but don't always get. Because if they could find that one thing that people always want, but never get, and give it to them on TV for an hour a week, they would make billions.

And they did. They did. The reason why Friends was, and still is, so successful, is because it portrays a wonderful way of community, friendly living, that most people would love to have.

Throughout the story, the six friends devote themselves to one another. They carry each other's burdens. They share with each other when they're in need.

They have lots of times together. And the world was watching and secretly thinking, crumbs, I love that. I mean, like, we don't really need modern day writers to tell us these things.

[ 5 : 40 ] Way back in the first century, Jesus taught this very teaching. Jesus declared this himself.

Jesus gathered 12 disciples around him, with whom he developed wonderful friendships with. And they lived in each other's pockets.

They shared everything. Carried each other's burdens. They did life together. And so, in the final hours of Jesus' mission, he was so, so keen to make sure the 12 kept doing it after he was gone.

And so, as I said in my recent pastor's letter for the report, he gathers them together at that famous last supper.

And they ate together. And they drank together. And there was food washing. They taught, sang, chatted, cried.

[ 6 : 55 ] All together as one, as deep friends and community. All fueled and stemmed by nothing but love. Love and love alone.

And so, Jesus says, and not even just in the pastor's letter. I've been quoting this since Easter, since day one. He says, together, disciples and him, all this friendship, all this community, all that.

He says, do it. A new command I give you, love one another. You must love one another. And then he adds, by this, we'll know that you are my disciples.

If, if, you love one another. Rocket science is it. If people love each other with the powerful love that Jesus loves us, that friendly community way described here, then the whole world will know you belong to Jesus.

And they'll want it. They will want the friendship, this community, this love. And so when Christ has risen and ascended and the church launches off, they do it.

[ 8 : 21 ] They really, really, really do it. They simply do exactly what Jesus told them to do.

It's expressed so well there in Acts chapter 2. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common, sold property, sold possessions, to give to anyone who had need.

They met in the temple courts, broke bread in their homes, ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

and the Lord added daily to those who were in. The outsiders watched and wanted in. Everything in common, shared everything, carried one another, shared burdens, real, genuine friendships, real, genuine community lives, real, authentic love, the love of Jesus and the outcome, the outcome, glad and sincere hearts, praising God, favor of all the people, daily kingdom growth.

[ 9 : 53 ] All because they took Jesus' last supper command to love very, very, very seriously. They took it literally.

They took it genuinely. Jesus is sitting there with them, having bread, chatting, and he says, go and do it. They literally, genuinely just did what he told them to do. Talked to each other.

Shared food together. The church has very good reason to be like this, to be this kingdom growth, this kingdom happiness, this joy.

We have very good reason to live this celebratory, victory-filled, positive lifestyle. The church is to be a place of celebration.

We should be the most positive people on the earth, constantly celebrating Jesus and the victory of God.

[ 10 : 55 ] Yes, it's a place of positive celebration, but supremely loved. That love that we keep talking about, a place of love.

First and foremost, a love for God. The church in Acts were fully in love with Jesus, the one true God.

And they were in love with his word. They were in love with the Bible. This fresh awakening from Holy Spirit that we looked at with the children, that fresh awakening had planted a new love for Scripture within the first century church.

And through Holy Spirit, they were now able to look back across Scripture and put the whole thing together, put the whole story together.

they could now see where all the prophecies were declared and how Jesus now fulfilled them. And they loved it. They loved reading the story.

[ 12 : 07 ] They loved what the story taught them, how the story encouraged them, and ultimately how the story brought them closer and closer to God. This fresh awakening of the Holy Spirit had given them a real new love to go back across all of Scripture and read the story of God.

And so they were simply all the more happy to keep reading the Bible. And then as verse 42 points out, they, those first Christians pursued that love of Scripture by then devoting themselves to the apostles' teachings.

Those same teachings which have now made the New Testament. So the first century church was devoting themselves to the apostles' teachings which are by and large what we're reading today still.

They were devoted to them. Back then, they were hearing them freshly off the press. And because Holy Spirit reveals God's truth, they were assured by Holy Spirit that these fresh teachings from the apostles are Scriptures.

This is God's Word. And so they loved it, devoted themselves to it, and lived back. they also had a new and revived understanding and love for sacraments.

[ 13 : 44 ] Having now come to terms that animal sacrifices were fulfilled, was done, they now loved to break bread and share the cup and remember Jesus as a memorial, as a celebration, as a thank you that he is the only needed sacrifice who has now covered them with his powerful blood.

and it was so precious to them that they brought it right into the very centre of their lives and families. Hence, they broke bread in their homes, inviting God right into their lives to get personal with him.

a new love for scripture, a new love for sacrament as a memorial remembering what Jesus had done.

And they had a new love for prayer. Holy Spirit had brought about prayer with no structure, with no rituals, with no boundaries.

Jesus had modelled a deep personal prayer life to them where he prayed everywhere and anywhere with everyone and anyone alongside making time for his quiet prayers in the mountains.

[ 15 : 22 ] And the disciples certainly loved it. And they rightfully copied him. The boundaries were gone, the structures were gone, it was now just a full flowing conversation with God.

They had a new love for scripture, a new love for the sacrament, i.e. the memorial remembering Jesus, and a new love for prayer. They first and foremost loved God.

And then they loved one another. The church should be marked by love for one another. and the first church certainly had the mark.

They were devoted to one another, devoted to each other. They continued to meet together, have fellowship, share meals. Jesus. And they had a love for the world.

Not the world and its ways, but a love for the people in the world, for people. They truly reflected Jesus' famous for God to love the world.

[ 16 : 34 ] and they were extremely outward with it. They were an extremely outward focused community of God worshipping church believers who were deeply impassioned to reach out, out to the community, to reach outside the church.

They performed signs and wonders. They told their testimonies. They talked about Jesus, all alongside reaching out to help everyone.

Their deacons arranged the distribution of funds to take care of those in need. When anyone from anywhere called, they just went to wherever it was and helped them and talked about Jesus to them.

they were so outward focused that they had favor of all the people. Daily new people came and joined in because the love.

Jesus said, lives were being transformed everywhere, left, right and center, people were being set for worry and death and they were now victoriously freed by Jesus and given love.

[ 18 : 22 ] Read in his fantastic Holy Spirit filled sermon explains the great victory of Jesus. The sermon given in the run up to this glorious description of the first church.

This chapter perhaps a little backwards but for good reason. We've got the description there of what the first century church. To that was Peter's sermon. So we see Peter gives four reasons why you are that Jesus has been raised from the dead and therefore that through his power within you, you too can and will be raised to life.

Peter convinces us it is certainly worth giving up your life for to join it. And so across this sermon, Peter addresses things.

One logic. He explains Satan's hold on death cannot it's than God's power of life and resurrection.

It's just seek truth. God is stronger than the devil. Love is stronger than life is stronger than death. Therefore it would be impossible for the light and good and God is always stronger.

[ 19 : 50 ] And then verse 24 there of chapter 2. God raised him talking to Jesus back from the dead freeing him from the agony of death because it was impossible. It was impossible.

Peter tells logically death darkness can't be stronger than light. 2 addresses this biblically.

He points out that the resurrection was indeed the Old Testament. He particularly points out the psalmist who quoted as I saw the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand.

I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body will rest in hope because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead.

Resurrection. You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead because resurrection is real. Jesus and all believers will not be abandoned to the realm of the dead but instead resurrected.

[ 21 : 02 ] That's scriptural and that's right across the Old Testament and that's King David in the Psalms talking about it. And Peter goes back and gets that. Biblically puts it in front of the hearers.

Peter recognises David as a prophet and David knew that God had promised an oath that he would place one of his descendants on the eternal heavenly throne.

And therefore there is rejoicing even here in the Psalms at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Three, Peter also addresses this personally.

Right across the New Testament Peter continuously shares his story. his story of what God has done for him. His story of what God has done in his life.

And of how he personally witnessed the risen Jesus Christ with his own eyes. Verse 32 he proclaims God has raised this Jesus Christ and we the other disciples and me are all witnesses.

[ 22 : 17 ] Are all witnesses. we watched it. So he addresses it logically. Life can't be stronger than death. Darkness can't be stronger than light. That's logic. He addresses it biblically.

He gets right back across the Old Testament scriptures looking at how David and how others talked about the resurrection of Jesus. He addresses it personally by saying I watched it myself.

and then he addresses it from experience. And this one is very important for me and you because he says the way one experiences the Holy Spirit is in itself evidence.

Evidence of the resurrection. Because after the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, then came the very, very, very final act in Jesus' saving ministry, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Exalted to the right hand of God, he received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. Holy Spirit. So the fact that Holy Spirit is here and we are experiencing him is evidence of the resurrection.

[ 23 : 41 ] because the outpouring of Holy Spirit was destined for after Jesus' resurrection. Jesus promised the wonders of the Holy Spirit would be in believers only after the resurrection and ascension.

So again, Peter says, the fact you are experiencing the Holy Spirit is proof the resurrection has happened. and happily, joyfully, wonderfully, the experience was not confined to those who were present on that day of Pentecost.

But it's for every Christian, it's for you, it's for me. Just look at verse 39 in there, chapter 2. The promise is for you and your children and all who are far off.

And get this next bit. for all whom the Lord our God will call. Hey, that's us. That's me and you today.

Every time someone experiences the Holy Spirit, it's evidence of the resurrection and that remains today. Every time you see someone being filled with Holy Spirit or hear someone giving testimony of how Holy Spirit has changed them, it's evidence of the resurrection.

- [ 25 : 25 ] And there's something else across this chapter that Holy Spirit enables each of us to personally accept and acknowledge. Holy Spirit enables us to recognize the truth of Peter's words.

You crucified Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus died for our sins.

We killed Jesus. My personal sin was present on the cross with Jesus.

The day I recognized this, I too was cut to the heart. Verse 37 there. And it is that true and real revelation that truly leads to repentance and a change of heart.

The day you recognize and realize your sin took Jesus to the cross, the day your heart truly changes. And the way one receives the promise is by repentance, faith in Jesus, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- [ 26 : 45 ] And the evidence that you have indeed received Holy Spirit is that you will be seen living a whole other way. And that whole other way will be lived in and amongst a radical transformed community.

A community which its ways, its practices, its stances are all set by the King of Kings. And those ways and practices and stances that the great King sets, one may expect to be a big constitutional, theologically, professionally, 1,000 page written document and all the rest of it, but actually those ways and stances of the Kingdom that the King of Kings has put into place is what we started with this morning.

It's an extremely simple, straightforward, 38-worded, right-to-the-point instruction. A new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another by this.

Everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. And so yes, right back to where we started. The greatest, most exciting, phenomenal movement the church works and succeeds by simply modelling the incredible community-based friendship that Jesus had of the twelve.

And the best model is there at the Last Supper. This is certainly what the first church just kept doing. And this is certainly why they grew and they expanded and developed.

- [ 28 : 35 ] because all the outsiders seen a love and a friendship and people talking to each other and community of each other that nowhere else gave them, that nowhere else did.

A friendship which was so simply done by just copying Jesus. Jesus. And so Westerhill's Baptist Church, times and cultures and ways have changed vastly since the first century.

There's particular ways and practices which our culture makes it a little tricky to do some of these things with. but we absolutely can be the best of friends.

We can have amazing friendships with each other. We can talk to each other. Exercise in all sorts of ways.

Companionship, community, hospitality, friendship and love and the Westerhill's Baptist Church were not too bad. Were not too bad.

- [ 29 : 46 ] Some churches, New Frontiers churches, they're fantastic at it. They're away at another level altogether. We're not where they are either, but we're not feeling miserably either.

So let's expand it. Let's do more of it. Everything you do is part of this fellowship. Pause and ask, does this reflect that love of Jesus with the twelve and the Last Supper?

forever. Every time you need to question something in this fellowship, pause and ask, by doing this, will I be fulfilling the command of Jesus to love?

And if you still need to go and question, then ask, how can I approach it, keeping in line with Jesus' command to love? love? Let's expand it, grow it, deepen it, do it more and more and more.

Verse 42 is so amazing, isn't it? It really is the big crescendo. love? They were growing, they had favour, they were happy, excited, joyful, they were loved and to do it was remarkable.

[ 31 : 11 ] I've said it already, they just copied Jesus. Let's do the same. Let's just copy Jesus.

let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you for the excitement of the first century church, the buzz, the movements, the enthusiasm, the electric.

Wow. Thank you for helping us grow the church together. Thank you for the companionship we do have, the friendships we do have, the love we do have, Lord, but we're human, Lord, and so it's a lifetime's work, God, from your Holy Spirit within us.

So keep doing it, Holy Spirit. Keep doing it, Holy Spirit. It's only completed on the day of you, Christ Jesus. So please keep doing the Holy Spirit to enable us to be what you did for the Last Supper.

Send us forth to be bold in inviting people to join in and be part of it. Give us a passion for that Jesus. Because if we truly love you, then why would we not, Lord?

[ 32 : 33 ] It's common sense. Come, Lord, lead us now to be faithful in the service of your King. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So if you're able to stand, please do for rightly so.

O church, arise. Thank you. Please feel free to stay for coffee and chat with us, get to know us more, and feel free to join the 6pm this evening for some light fellowship.

And so, from the mouth of Jesus, a new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. But as everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

And so to him, he is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy. To the only God, our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ, our Lord, before all ages, now, and forever more.

Amen.