

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

Pentecost was an Old Testament feast day, one of three the Jews were to celebrate. They were to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that is, Passover. They were to celebrate the Feast of Weeks, which is also called Pentecost because it happened 50 days after the Sabbath of Passover week — Pentecost means 50th. And they were to celebrate the Feast of Ingathering or the Feast of Booths at the end of the year.

Today, as the New Testament church, we celebrate Pentecost, not as a Jewish Harvest Festival, but as the day that the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised His disciples, was given to the church.

And what a great day to do it! After all, Jerusalem was full of people from all over the Roman Empire; people from the north, south, east and west of Jerusalem were there in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks. What an opportune time to preach the Gospel! What an opportune time to clothe the disciples with power from on high, for Jesus had told His disciples before He ascended and was glorified, *“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

Indeed, ten days later, on Pentecost, in a mighty display, this promise was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples gathered *“all together in one place,” “and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”* With *“divided tongues as of fire ... [resting] on each one of them, ... they ... began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* They began their work of being witnesses *“to the end of the earth.”* They began to preach to those gathered in Jerusalem, *“in [their] own tongues, [that is, in their own native languages,] the mighty works of God.”*

This day was especially impressive. Here was a group of Galileans — no doubt able to speak Greek, the language of commerce in the Empire, but likely not schooled in the diverse languages of the Empire — all speaking in the various native languages. That’s right! The Holy Spirit needed no instruction in how to speak in other languages.

Nor did He need instruction on what to say. The Holy Spirit Himself is the teacher as Jesus had told the disciples: *“And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say”* (Luke 12:11-12). Again, Jesus had said, *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”* (John 14:26). And so on Pentecost, the disciples preached as the Holy Spirit taught

them—they preached “*the mighty works of God,*” that is, they preached Jesus, the Son of David, crucified and killed, raised from the dead, ascended to the Father, Lord and Christ, for “*this is the work of God, that you believe in him—Jesus—whom he has sent*” (John 6:29).

Now the people thought the disciples had drunk too much wine, a rather foolish thought. Who really believes that a person’s ability to make rational arguments improves when they are drunk? Who really believes that drunkenness enhances one’s ability to speak in other languages? On the other hand, it’s true that the disciples had drunk. They had drunk, as we heard Jesus tell them to do in the Gospel lesson, from Him.

Now, you know, there are other streams that one can drink from—there were back then; there are now. St. Paul warns us about them: “*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ*” (Col. 2:8). Today, many people around our nation, maybe even we, have been taken captive by political philosophies — politics — and we can see the kind of havoc that it wreaks. Dear friends, politics is not a stream that contains living water. Repent!

Living water comes from Christ. That’s what Jesus told the woman at the well: “*If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water*” (John 4:10). The prophet Jeremiah tells us also that the Lord Himself is “*the fountain of living water*”. And as St. John the Divine taught, “*the Lamb in the midst of the throne [is our] shepherd, and he will guide [us] to springs of living water*” (Rev. 7:17).

Although we didn’t hear it today in the portion of Acts 2 that we heard, read on, and you will hear Peter preach Christ for he had drunk from the river of living water that flowed from the heart of Jesus Himself. Jesus is the source of living water, which brings me to the Gospel.

What did Jesus say in the Gospel today? We know that what He said, “*he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive,*” for the Evangelist told us that. But what did Jesus say? That, “*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’*”? That’s the way your ESV translates it. Out of the believer’s heart flows this river of living water, and supposedly Scripture teaches that!? Ridiculous! Where does Scripture teach that? The ESV cross references refer the reader to a verse from John 4 where Jesus said, “*The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life*” (John 4:14), but notice that the source is Jesus. He gives the water. And they refer the reader to Proverbs 18, where we hear “*The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook*”

(Prov. 18:4). Read the context of that verse if you think that “*the words of a man’s mouth*” are the “*bubbling brook*” of wisdom. That’s utter foolishness!

No, we know what comes forth from the heart of man: “*what comes out of the mouth [of man] proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander*” (Matt. 15:18-19).

Thus, I would side with those who would translate Jesus’ words in the Gospel as it’s contained in the ESV footnote, and as we read it today. “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’*” That puts the source of living water in the right heart, not the believer’s, but Jesus’. Truly, Jesus is the “*Author of life*” (Acts 3:15); “*in Him was life*” (John 1:4); He is the “*Resurrection and the Life*” (John 11:25); He is “*the Way and the Truth and the Life*” (John 14:6). And He is the Rock from which the living water flows (1 Cor. 10:4).

Moreover, it’s from Him that the Spirit proceeds, not us. That’s what we just confessed in the Nicene Creed: that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Jesus is the Author of life, Scripture says, and the Spirit is “*the Lord and Giver of Life.*” Jesus said it: “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*”

Truly, the rivers of living water flow from the heart of Jesus. It is His words. It is spirit and life. The Spirit’s word bears witness to the Son; the Spirit’s working brings to remembrance all the Son has said; the Spirit’s calling gives faith to those who drink of this living water. On the other hand, of the believer the Psalmist says, “*He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers*” (Psalm 1:3).

Dear believers in Christ, drink from the rivers of living water that come from Jesus and are given by the Spirit. Jesus has now ascended to the Father and been glorified so that you may drink of these rivers, for in His going He promised this Spirit to His church, and on Pentecost, the promise was fulfilled. In His church, He has preserved the apostolic word through which we believe; He has given us the Sacraments which deliver this word to us that creates and strengthens our faith; we have the creeds which summarize that word and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author of our life; we pray our prayers, and sing our hymns, and hear the preaching whereby the Spirit, the giver of life, continues to point us to Christ. These are the living waters that flow out of Christ, carried along by the Holy Spirit. By these, we call on the name of the Lord and are saved.

Thanks be to God for our Lord Jesus Christ, the Author of Life, and thanks be to God the Holy Spirit who proceeds from Him for giving us that life.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.