

The True Miracle of Pentecost

I always think about Pentecost being the wonderful first bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, but we can get so distracted by the wow factor of the sound like a mighty rushing wind, the divided tongues as of fire, and the apostles speaking in other tongues that we don't notice the major miracle of Pentecost.

This miracle shows up in the response of those who gathered on that day. They came together. They heard the mighty works of God. Then they responded. This is the great miracle of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit added three thousand souls to His church on that day. Pentecost is not so much about the Holy Spirit poured out on the apostles; it is about the Holy Spirit poured out on those three thousand souls.

Martin Luther wrote that the "Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ." Pentecost is an example of that: 1,500 years earlier, the Holy Spirit worked through His servant Moses to establish feasts that would prepare the way for this moment.

The Pentecost pilgrims who gathered together had been looking forward to the Messiah. They kept the ceremonial laws, customs, and sacrifices as a reminder that one day the Messiah would come and fulfill all the Law. As the people of the Old Testament gathered, they encountered people who told them who Jesus is and what He did for their salvation. These people did not speak in the lofty Hebrew of the temple, nor the street language of Aramaic, nor the commercial language of Greek, nor even the legal language of Latin, but each pilgrim heard the story of salvation in his own native language.

Amid all the amazing things that happened on that Pentecost, it is easy to confuse God's goal with the means that He used to accomplish that goal. After all, this is exciting stuff ... a rushing wind ... flames of fire ... the sudden ability to speak and understand a foreign language. It is easy to get distracted by all these things and forget the main goal ... the goal of creating faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the goal of the Holy Spirit on that Pentecost long ago, and it is still His goal today.

But even amid the signs and wonders of that special Pentecost, some resisted. This can be a great comfort to us as we share our faith to the people we meet in our lives. Sometimes, they will be interested and want to know more. Other times they will reject our confession. When that rejection comes, we can take comfort in knowing that even when there was the sound like a

mighty rushing wind, the divided tongues as of fire, and the apostles speaking in other languages, that there were some people who resisted their message. We should expect that and continue to confess our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

On the day after that special Pentecost, there was no sound of a mighty wind. The tongues of fire had gone away. People spoke simply in their own language. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit was still at work through the Word of God. It has always been that way and always will be. The Holy Spirit points to Jesus who is the God-Man who saves us from our sin with His suffering and death on the cross and promises us life everlasting with His resurrection. The Holy Spirit works through God's Word when we receive it and share it with those who do not know Jesus.