

THE GOOD SOUNDS OF PENTECOST

(Acts 2:1-21)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ

Text: Acts 2:1 – 21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God freeing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome both Jews and converts to Judaism; Cretans and Arabs - we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean? Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews, and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy'. Your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord be saved. "'

Dear friends in Jesus,

Pentecost is a time for noise and a time for good sounds. I am aware as much as any parent that loud noise is not always good. The extremely loud sounds of rock music have undoubtedly hurt the ears of many listeners. Loud singing, especially off-key, can be distracting, and a sudden blast of sound can make you jump. However, I think we Lutheran lean more to quietness. Let us learn to break forth and make joyful sounds when the occasion arises - especially at Pentecost.

Early in our text in Acts 2 we are told that when these early Christians were together, there was suddenly a sound from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and the whole house was filled with sound. What an exciting time that must have been to those listeners! So much so that the Holy Spirit really got into them, and made them speak in many different languages. It must have been a terrific experience of noise and sound. There was joy and excitement; there was holiness and celebration; there was noise and movement. The fact is that some people thought that those Christians were drunk, even though it was only nine o'clock in the morning.

Now let's take a close look. The God of Pentecost is not divided. It is the same God who put the earth in order, and the same God who prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. The Holy Spirit does not suddenly become some 'spooky' agent for silly souls. The saving work of Jesus and the loving care of the Father are gifts, so is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Some people seem to feel that the gifts of Pentecost are for their own celebration. They seem to delight in being elevated above all others, who in their thinking are not 'true Christians'. There are some who call themselves Pentecostals and become very judgmental. Of course, this is not true of many of them.

I have no quarrel with anyone who wants to speak in tongues. But I happen to be one who is more impressed by the person who says it clearly, and praises God in words and songs that are understandable to me and to others. I like that kind of sound and that kind of a 'Pentecostal'. The Holy Spirit becomes the clear announcer, and the essence and giver of truth more than an over emotional surge. Luther once said that the preacher he loves best was a little robin who preached to him daily. He came to take the crumbs on Luther's windowsill, flew to a tree nearby, lifted his voice to God, and sang his carol of praise and gratitude, tucked his head under his wing, went fast asleep, and left tomorrow look after itself. Said Luther, "He is the best preacher I have on earth." That is a good sound. It can be repeated because it is a wonderful response.

Jesus said to allow little children to come to him, and that we must become like little children. The story of God's great joy and outpouring of his Spirit is good for children. They listen. They make noise. It's good for the youth of our church. They, too, make noise. Perhaps the adults have more worldly wax in their ears.

Parents who continue to grow are those who listen first to God and then to the real needs of their children. It means to join with them in expressing our Christian faith that sounds joyful and exuberant. It means sharing Jesus and his forgiveness and love for us frequently.

Pentecost is a fresh breeze and sound. Your faith can be blessed and touched by someone who talks about Jesus or lives their faith in a new and caring way. The book of Acts is still being written in our day, and the Holy Spirit, just like at Pentecost, can still produce the sounds of joy and renewal.

Peter was the great leader of the early church, and he was very much involved in the first Pentecost. He had made a lot of noise that he later wished to blot out, denying Jesus etc. But on the day of Pentecost and after that day, led by the Holy Spirit, he fearlessly proclaimed Jesus as Lord and Saviour and Friend. Too many Christians' lives today are dull and expressionless. Precious souls need to see from time to time an outburst of the reality of your faith, that is alive and exciting and centred in Jesus, and given to you by the Holy Spirit.

The church cannot run and hide quietly from our world. We need to come out from behind our curtains. We need to brighten up our worship, and add real and new life to our Christian teachings. Hear the sounds from heaven in God's world. Make a joyful noise to God, and speak a loving sound to those who have not heard. You will be as excited and expressive as those disciples described in our text, noise and sound makers, telling precious souls about Jesus, crucified, risen, ascended - the Holy Spirit working in you and through you. **Amen.**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Graham Zweck
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