

**"He Will Testify About Me"**

**(John 15:26)**

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**Introduction: Pentecost, the 50<sup>th</sup> day, refers to the Hebrew Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10), the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), and the day of First Fruits (Numbers 28:26).**

- A. The time of the feast is not at all random. The season of Pentecost is in the spring when early figs ripen...it is the time to harvest the fruit.**
- B. That fruit supplied invaluable food for the people of Israel. It was the source of their physical lives. It was testimony of Yahweh's providential care. Through the harvest, God was supplying their need, and in a sense with every new season, God was giving His people new life.**
- C. So in effect, Pentecost is about fruit for new life. This helps us to really understand what happened at that first Christian Pentecost.**
- D. At the Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter 2, God gave a special gift – "fruit" that was invaluable – and this gift; this fruit gave and gives new life dear Christians. Soak in what I'm saying: at Pentecost God gave to us His people NEW LIFE!**

**Part I: This is EXACTLY what we poor sinners NEED!**

- A. We are confronted all around by entropy and images of the results of living in a fallen world. Things wear out.**
- B. While I have not done the best job in taking care of myself, I still remain fairly active. Last Sunday after church Traci and I and three of the kids went on a Lake Forest hike for almost two hours. By the time we got back, we were *exhausted*! It didn't do much for my self-esteem as I was reminded once again that my soon-to-be 47 year-old body doesn't quite work like the 27-year old body I once had. Boy, do I miss it!**
- C. I've had to learn this throughout the holy ministry as well in terms of my participation in congregational activities. At my first congregation, St. John in Covina, I thought I was in heaven, not only because St. John was a great congregation of God's people (and still is), but also *because we had a fantastic basketball court on our pre-school through 8<sup>th</sup> grade campus. I started there when I was 25 and so I couldn't help myself as we started a Saturday morning "Basketball Fellowship"! We'd open up the gym to the community to play some 5-on-5 full court ball. We would meet at center court to have a devotion and then go to town with some serious basketball for at least two hours. And back then...NO PROBLEM.***
- D. Well, several years later when I arrived to my call in The Woodlands, TX, I was delighted to hear that that congregation already had Saturday morning basketball going on in the park across the street from the church. And that was the year I learned**

something: while my mind was still somewhere between 18-25 when it came to playing basketball, all of a sudden (so it seemed) my body had changed. A few months into playing, I developed a lateral meniscus tear in a knee. Life *changed*! I would never dunk a basketball again...I would do well just to touch the net! And when you're 6'5", that's sad!

- E. But a lateral meniscus tear is nothing in the broader reality: "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a)...we are confronted with death itself and when we realize just how serious the dryness of our soul can be, we can feel exhausted physically, emotionally, mentality and even spiritually...we can and do feel dry and worn out because – and the truth hurts – we are sinners. Our exhaustion is the proof of our rebellion against God; it is the sign of our unbelief and turning from the Living God.

## **Part II: But what is truly amazing is that God gave us Pentecost!**

- A. What would have happened if Christ had showed His amazing grace at Calvary's cross (like He truly did) and His victorious power over death through the empty tomb (like He really did), but then ascended and then...nothing...what if He had just left us to ourselves...alone, powerless, suffering from the slow and inevitable entropy not only of body, but of spirit?
- B. But He didn't leave us. Instead He gave us Pentecost! He said, "Here is some new life my child! Don't despair! When you feel your life running out, take heart and behold: I give you a brand new harvest, a new supply of life...I give you the Holy Spirit who gives ME – your Savior, your Lord – Jesus Christ!
- C. New life changes everything. And I have new realizations: I really don't need to dunk a basketball to be filled with the greatest joy I've ever known. I've never loved being a child of God, a husband, a dad, and a pastor more than I do now...but it isn't because of my discipline, or my work; it isn't because I've clinched my fists and grinded my teeth, and huffed and puffed, it is because of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of Jesus and the Sacrament of Jesus that keeps giving a new harvest of life...and this is true for you as well!
- D. You know, I have a perspective that not every pastor gets. It's a little unusual to get to come back to a church that you served before and though in truth, we are becoming a new and a different church here at Saint Paul's – and she is beautiful by the way...you are – we still have several members who were here before. And what's really cool is what I see the Holy Spirit doing: Christians who continue to be fed year after year after year after year with the new life of the Holy Spirit, get better. No, I'm not saying that we become less sinful; and no, I'm not saying that we are earning or meriting anything, but I'm saying that you see the work of God over time. Our congregational president Chris Panichi was pretty awesome back in 1996 (I was amazed at his energy and professionalism), but here we are in 2012 and I've never loved him more; I was very fond of Dr. Paul and Dr. Ashley Fick when we were working together with Dr. Mueller back around 1999 to start the All Saint's Mission in Aliso Viejo, but I've never been closer to Paul and Ashley. I loved Don and Sylvia Cittel back in Laguna Beach, but we are closer today than ever before...and I get excited as I pray that this will be the trend with every family in this congregation; that by the power of the Holy Spirit poured out

upon us through the Word and Sacrament of Jesus Christ, the new life given to us will just make us will translate into great things occurring in the Kingdom of God at this particular locale.

Conclusion: Forgive me for the short sermon today and for probably straying from the text a little too much, but...

- A. The results of Pentecost are still occurring.
- B. Christ comes to you by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit who has been poured upon you through Holy Baptism.
- C. And it is Jesus Christ dear friends is has gifted you with the Holy Spirit known as our advocate, our counselor, our comforter as you face whatever you need to face. You are not alone, but God Himself is pouring new life into you.
- D. All of this reminds me of one of my favorites verses in Holy Scripture that very much relates to what we have spoken about this morning. Please read it with me:

***“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” – 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:16-17***

- E. Thanks be to God dear Christian. God has given you the Harvest, His new life is yours today and for the rest of your life, and for all eternity. The Savior’s blood has washed the stain of sin from you; His resurrection has won for you life with no limits; and His Pentecost has given you the Holy Spirit so that God’s Harvest of new life for you is inexhaustible!