

Sermon: A Spirit-filled Church
Text: Acts 2:1 – 47
Date: May 25, 2008 AM
Place: Jesup First UMC

One day, a little boy went to the circus and as he was sitting there, he became fascinated with the clowns, especially one clown with a handful of balloons. And as he watched this clown, the clown took a yellow balloon, held it in his hand, let the string slip from his hand, and watched as the balloon rose into the sky. He did the same thing with an orange balloon, and a blue one, and a white one. And soon, the boy began to wonder if a black balloon would do the same thing. So, he tugged on the clown's shirt and said: "*Sir, will a black balloon do the same thing?*" and without saying a word, the clown took a black balloon, held it in his hand, let go of the string and together they watched as the balloon rose into the sky. Then, the clown turned to the boy and said: "*Yep, sure will. You see, it's not the color of the balloon; it's what's on the inside that counts.*"

It's what's on the inside that counts! I think that's what Pentecost is all about. Now, Pentecost actually fell on Mother's Day this year, but I believe it's important that we celebrate Pentecost. This is the day we celebrate the birth of the Church, and the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit to be with us and to dwell within us.

You see, it was on the Day of Pentecost, as those early disciples were gathered in the Upper Room, praying and seeking the face of God, that suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire house. And

tongues of fire came down and rested on each of the believers and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, from time to time, we hear people talking about being filled with the Spirit and there are even Churches that claim to be Spirit-filled, but what exactly does that mean? What does it mean to be Spirit-filled? Well, it seems to me after looking at the Book of Acts that there are five things that are characteristic of a Spirit-filled Church. Let's look at them together.

1. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH IS PEACEFUL!

Verse one says: "*When the Day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place.*" Later on in chapter 2, Luke tells us that there was such unity, such a sense of community among these early believers that they shared everything, even to the point of selling their possessions and pooling the money together to care for the needs of others.

That's something that seems to be missing in the Church today ... a sense of unity. We just can't seem to come together. Everybody wants to do their own thing; every little group in the Church wants things to go their way. This group wants this; that group wants something else; and there's another group that never shows up, and yet sits back and complains about everything.

And we wonder why the Spirit of God is not more evident in our Church; we wonder if we'll ever see God moving in our midst. Well, we won't until we come together and find unity. In I Corinthians 12,

Paul describes the Church as a Body where all the parts need each other and depend on each other. Now, that's a Spirit-filled Church.

A Spirit filled Church is a peaceful Church.

2. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH HAS POWER.

Verse 2 says, “*And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind.*” We only have to look back at Mother's Day to see how powerful and destructive the wind can be. The damage in South Georgia is still being calculated. The wind is powerful, but so is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always comes in power.

In the Old Testament, we read about a man named Samson. Now, Samson did incredible things, not on his own strength, but in the strength of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came upon him, he destroyed the Philistines with a donkey's jawbone; he tied the foxes tails together and send them to destroy the crops of his enemy; and he brought down the Philistine Temple, killing himself in the process.

When the same Holy Spirit fell upon the Church in Jerusalem, they were filled with power. They had miracle-working power, power to heal the sick, power to raise the dead, but where is that power today? You see, this is the power that changed the world. Those early Christians turned the world upside down. In less than 300 years, Christianity went from being a sect of Judaism and an insignificant religious movement to being the official religion of the Roman Empire, but where is that power today?

Oh how we need that power! We need a power greater than our own that will enable us to live for Christ. We need a miracle working power! We need a power that will raise a dying Church to life again!

Lord, send that old time power, the Pentecostal power that sinners be converted and your name glorified.

A Spirit-filled Church has power.

3. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH IS PURE!

Verse 3 says: “*Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.*” Fire is a symbol of purity. And the Holy Spirit is the spirit of purity. God is so concerned with purity among His people that when sin enters the Church in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, God deals with it immediately.

You remember that story? Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and brought the money to the Church, but they didn't bring all of the money; they kept some back. And when Ananias came in, he lied to Peter and he was struck dead at Peter's feet. A few minutes later, Sapphira came in and repeated the lie and she fell dead at Peter's feet.

Listen friends, God deals seriously with sin in the Church. By His grace, He allows us to confess our sins and to receive His forgiveness, but that doesn't mean He isn't concerned about purity in the Church. God is holy and He is seeking a holy people who will worship Him and serve Him with all their heart.

A Spirit-filled Church is pure.

4. A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH IS PASSIONATE.

Verse 4 says: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.” These people were passionate about their mission of spreading the Gospel. Jesus had said: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses.” There were thousands and thousands of people in Jerusalem celebrating Pentecost and the Church proclaimed the good news to each of them in their own language. Everywhere they went, they shared the good news with anybody that would listen ... with peasants and kings, with Jews and with Gentiles.

They were passionate about the gospel and that passion took them from Jerusalem throughout Judea, to Samaria and to the utter most parts of the world.

A Spirit-filled Church is passionate.

You know, sometimes, it becomes really easy for you and me to sit back and complain about the Church. We all know what the Bible says the Church can be and should be. And some of us have memories of what the Church once was. And then, we see what the Church is ... a Church in decline, a Church losing membership, a boring place that seems to be out of touch with real life. Is there any hope for the Church? Can the Church be better than it is today?

My friends, the only hope for our Church, the only hope for the Church is that we might fall on our knees before God, seeking His face, seeking to be baptized with the wind and the fire of God. There has never been a more important time for the Church to

experience God's peace, God's power, God's purity, and God's passion than today. Oh that we might fall on our faces before God saying: "*Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me; Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me; melt me; mold me, fill me, use me; Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me.*"