

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

The Day of Pentecost
Saturday, May 22, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 23, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

“The Holy Spirit is at Home in You”

John 14:23-31

Our Gospel lesson this morning is Jesus’ answer to a question from the disciple Judas, not Judas Iscariot, but Judas son of James. The scene is the upper room, and Jesus has been speaking very plainly about who He is, His relationship with the Father in heaven and the Holy Spirit who was the Counselor who was to come – which we are celebrating on this feast of Pentecost.

Judas asks a question that is one which must have occurred to many, if not all, of the disciples. Judas asks, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself (that is, show yourself) to us, and not to the world?” They must have been thinking, if only Jesus would perform miracles and speak clearly about being the Son of God to everybody, and allow everybody the intimate contact the disciples had, then everybody would believe.

We could say, if Jesus would come and perform miracles and personally preach from this pulpit, everyone would come and come to faith and all would be good and right in the world. Instead, your stuck with me. I can only bring you the Word of God and the Sacraments.

If only Christ would teach and perform miracles for everybody the way He did for the disciples, then all the world would have to believe and love God.

Jesus dispels that notion. Miracles and direct, tangible contact with God as seen throughout the Old and New Testament would perhaps strike fear in the hearts of the people, but very infrequently would love be the result.

The Bible is littered with examples of people who had miraculous signs and wonders appear before their eyes, or they heard the Word of God spoken directly through one of the prophets of God, and they still wanted nothing to do with the Lord.

As Judas son of James is asking his question, the other Judas, who spent three years in the company of Christ, hearing His words, witnessing His miracles -- He is, at that very moment, carrying out his plot to betray the Lord.

No sign or wonder will bring forth life and faith in a heart that the Holy Spirit has not first cultivated with the Word of God in love. Faith is the result of a miracle and direct revelation, but the miracle is not one witnessed by our five senses. The miracle is that God the Holy Spirit creates faith and creates life in our dead, sinful hearts.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit manifests Himself, causes miraculous events to occur, and the crowd was either bewildered and perplexed asking, "What does this mean?" (Proving that early Christians were Lutheran – I'm just kidding. There is nothing like Catechism humor). And others in the crowd were mocking the disciples saying that they must be drunk.

It was not until Peter proclaimed the Good News of salvation in the preaching of the Gospel that any in the crowd came to faith. And we read later, on that day, 3000 came to faith.

We read later in the book of Acts, Paul heals a crippled man, and the crowd who had been listening to his preaching about Christ rose up and shouted that Zeus and Hermes had come to visit them. They tried to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas.

Even after Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes to show their anguish at this unholy response and pleaded with them to turn from their worthless pagan idols, they still had difficulty in keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

Our sinful nature wants to see the spectacular, but then also wants to give credit for the miracle to someone other than God.

There is no sure-fire recipe for convincing someone of the truth of the Gospel. Brothers and sisters raised in the same household may have very different views of God in their adult years.

It is like in the parable of the sower. The seed of the Word of God is always good seed. But sometimes it gets choked out by the world, or snatched away by Satan, or springs up quickly but has no root.

The people throughout history who have been awed or wowed by miracles and direct revelation but had no love for God were like those from the parable who had no root, no depth to their faith. In His answer to Judas' question, Jesus is basically telling them that the "shock and awe" approach to evangelism is not the way to go. It will not work long term.

Faith happens when God cultivates love in your heart, plants the seed of the Word, and then makes His home with you. Our love and obedience to God, our outward signs of joy and kindness to others is

a byproduct of God having made His home in our hearts. This is the work of God in general and the Holy Spirit in particular.

Now Pentecost was “shock and awe”. But that was not the long term program. The Gospel is best spread one person to another. That is how the Holy Spirit works. It is not anything you have done or the result of my or any pastor’s clever promotional campaign. This is God’s work in us as He allows His Word of grace and light of truth to find its way through the darkness of our sinful hearts.

It is futile to ask why we have been so blessed -- why God chose us to be His faithful children, and not others. All that we can do is to show our love and thankfulness by being obedient to His teaching. As Christ our Lord said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

We gather this morning in God’s house in response to the love we have been shown. It is our small way to give thanks that He has made us His home. Amen.