

May 28, 2023: Day of Pentecost

Main Idea: The Holy Spirit delights in—and works best through—the diversity in our communities. God’s love for all of us is so immense that it seeks to express itself in as many different ways as it can.

Pentecost marks a transition in the way we talk about the gospel. In other seasons, we seek to understand the gospel, to wrap our minds and our hearts around it through the witness of Jesus. Now, we seek to share the gospel, to invite others to wrap their minds and hearts around it through our witness. Our texts refer to this witness as our prophecy. Basically, Pentecost is all about marking the descent of the Holy Spirit onto the early apostles, which is also the start of the early church in something close to an organized or institutional sense.

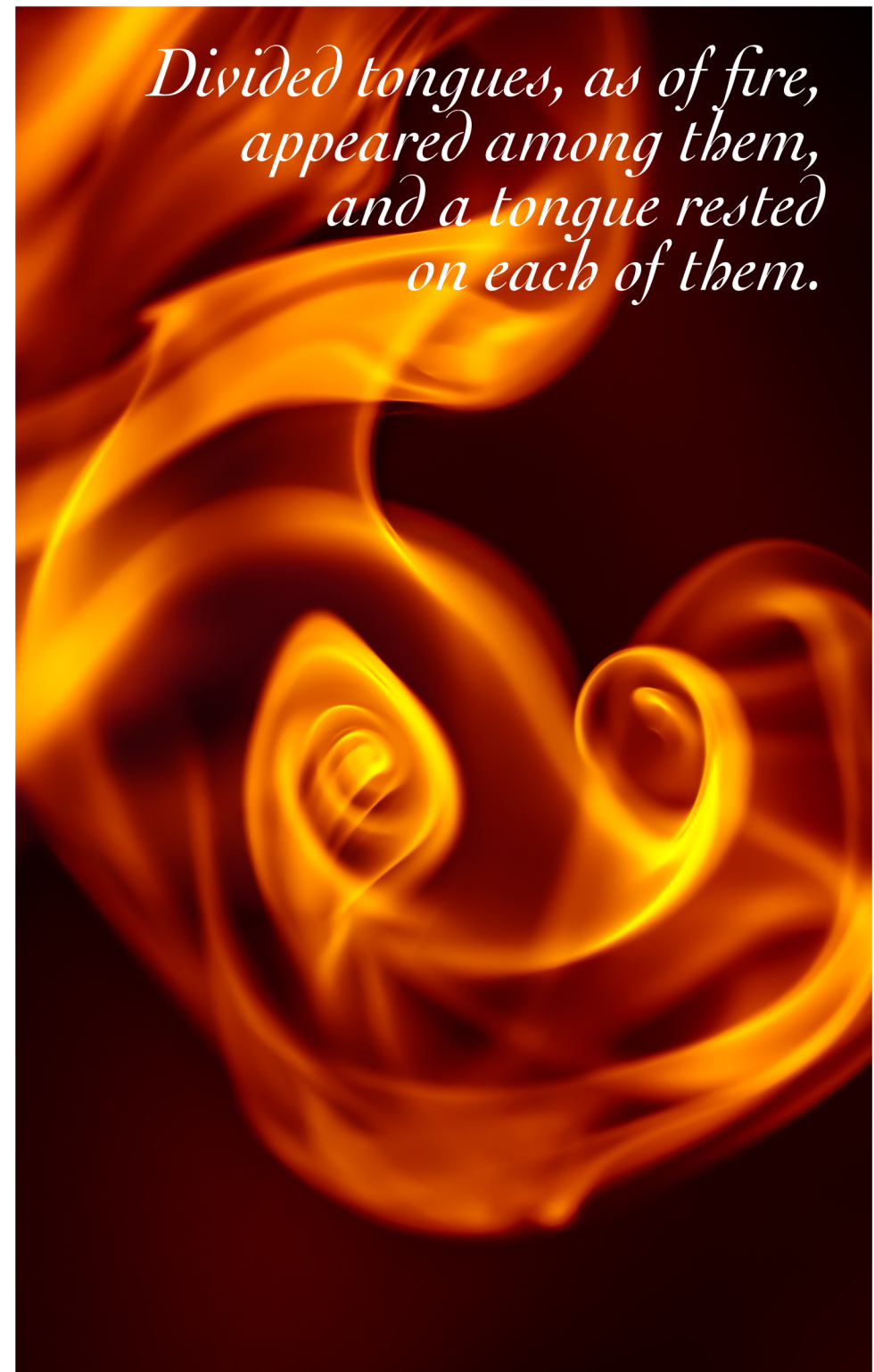
Acts 2, Numbers 11, and 1 Corinthians all focus on the uniqueness or personalization of prophecy. Anybody, anywhere can hear a message in their own tongue. Anybody at any time can feel included in the movement and the momentum of the gospel. This is comforting and bewildering all at once—a little bit incredible and a little bit chaotic. The journey of spiritual manifestation can look a lot of different ways.

But 1 Corinthians 12:7 reminds us that, “the manifestation of the Spirit [is given to individuals] for the common good.” In other words, there is always a method to God’s madness as the Spirit descends—a constant and, ultimately, unifying purpose. A person’s experience and internalization of the gospel, however it might initially reach them, will lead them to the same place it leads everyone else: connection in Christ.

The beauty of Pentecost stems from the fact that, while God could have chosen one, central way to reach God’s people and invite them into lives of ministry and witness, God chooses something much more eclectic. Much more creation-centered. Much more powerful. God works through one, central person, of course—the person of Jesus Christ—but God manifests the Holy Spirit in a million different ways at once, molding, growing and spreading the gospel in true participation with all of God’s creation.

Scripture Summary

Jesus may no longer walk the earth alongside his followers, but by no means is he absent. The disciples are about to get blown away by a new and powerful presence.



GOD'S WORD for Today

May 28, 2023
Day of Pentecost

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. ⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.” ¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Psalm: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

³No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Gospel: John 20:19-23

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Alternate Gospel: John 7:37-39

³⁷On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, ³⁸and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.