

Sermon for Pentecost (Festival of Shavuot)

Date: June 9, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Genesis 11:1–9

Second Reading: Acts 2:1–21

Gospel Reading: John 14:23–31

Sermon Text: John 14:23–31

Sermon Title: What is Shavuot?!

Introit: Psalm 1:2-6; Antiphon Psalm 1:1

Hymns:

LSB 902 – Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now

LSB 497 – Comes, Holy Ghost, God and Lord

LSB 655 – Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

LSB 917 – Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Divine Service III



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Text: John 14:23–31

Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will go to them and make our home with them. A person who does not love me does not do what I say. I don’t make up what you hear me say. What I say comes from the Father who sent me. I have told you this while I am still with you. However, the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything. He will remind you of everything that I have ever told you. I am leaving you peace. I am giving you my peace. I don’t give you the kind of peace that the world gives. So don’t be troubled or cowardly. You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away, but I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me you would be glad that I’m going to the Father because the Father is greater than I am. I’m telling you this now before it happens. When it does happen you will believe. The ruler of this world has no power over me, but he’s coming, so I won’t talk with you much longer. However, I want the world to know that I love the Father and that I am doing exactly what the Father has commanded me to do. Get up! We have to leave.”

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May God's grace reign over you all the days of your life. Amen.

I want to remind you of two things:

First: I wonder how many of you remember the little game we played when we had our Seder service last year. The middle bread was hidden and the children had to find it. The one who found it got a prize. The child is supposed to haggle for the prize but what is offered first is their own Bible, which they don't want because they know they'll get one anyway in a few weeks anyway.



Second: I want you to remember something I've mentioned about Pentecost. I've mentioned that it is an Old Testament festival, not a New Testament one. In the Old Testament it is called Shavuot. It was instituted by God long before Jesus walked the earth.

What could these two things have in common? They have today in common. Today is Pentecost. Pentecost is the seventh Sunday after Passover (and Easter). Among other places in Scripture we read in Numbers 28:26 God saying:

During the Festival of [seven] Weeks, you must have a holy assembly. On that day you must not do any regular work. Bring the Lord your new grain offering, the first produce harvested from your fields.

It was this sacred holy day that had brought large crowds of people into Jerusalem. It was also a day of celebration and, as with nearly all things celebratory, some people celebrated too much. It was at the "third hour," by their reckoning (or 9:00am by ours), something new happened. Something happened that had not happened before. There was the sound of a rushing wind that filled the house where the disciples were staying.



Then tongues that looked like fire appeared to them. The tongues arranged themselves so that one came to rest on each believer. Then, wait that's not all, everyone began to speak in different languages. Faithful Jewish believers were there. It specifically mentions: Parthians, Medes, and Elamites. People from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the country near Cyrene in Libya. There were Jewish people, converts to Judaism, and visitors from Rome, Crete, and Arabia.¹

Like I said, as with nearly all things celebratory some people celebrated too much. This is what some people thought was going on as the disciples began to speak. Then Peter got up and started to preach. Wow! What a message he gave. He starts out quoting the prophet Joel² and tells them that Jesus is in fact the Messiah. He is the Son of God. He hits them with a full dose of the Law. He says:

1 Acts 2:1-11

2 Acts 2:17-21

By using men who do not acknowledge Moses' Teachings,
you crucified Jesus who was given over to death.

... but as with any good sermon there needs to be a balance of the Gospel with the Law, so he says, "this was God's plan."³

Of course that's not very much Gospel. They still stand there being convicted before God of having illegally executed the Son of God, of murdering their Messiah. You have to guess they guessed that was not good. In fact you can hear the desperation in their voices when they ask these men, whom moments earlier they had ridiculed as drunk, "Brothers, what should we do?"⁴

Not to worry. Remember Peter was restored. Peter the renowned renouncer, the denier of Jesus, was restored and forgiven by Jesus. Jesus told him, "feed my sheep."⁵ Before Peter now stands a goodly measure of God's holy flock, His sheep. Peter is now speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, and he is not going to let these people hang in limbo and wonder as to their salvation.

They asked, "what should we do?" Peter's answer was simple and clear:

All of you must turn to God and change the way you think and act. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

This promise belongs to you and to your children and to everyone who is far away. It belongs to everyone who worships the Lord our God.⁶



"Well pastor," you might say, "that's nice to know. It's in the Bible and the Bible is good, but what does that have to do with the Seder meal game, and you still haven't really told us what Shavuot is.

Well let's start with Shavuot. Shavuot is the festival of the new harvest. The first crop of early grains has come in, and the barns are being filled. It happens 50 days after Passover. Why did God choose this very festival to bring His New Testament to light. Because the whole and entire purpose of the New Testament is to bring people to the knowledge of Jesus and the salvation He earned for all people. The purpose of the New Testament, the New Contract, is to bring in the harvest.

From the first day I arrived here at St. John's I've been teaching the same thing. We cannot be a church that keeps to ourselves. We need to be a church that gets outside of these walls. A church that is for more than just people who already think like we do. We need to be a church to those who have no church; those who don't know the truths we teach; those who need a church.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, so ask the Lord who gives this harvest to send workers to harvest His crops."⁷

3 Acts 2:22-23

4 Acts 2:37

5 John 21:15-17

6 Acts 2:38-39

7 Matthew 9:37-38

When Jesus says that He is talking about this harvest, the New Testament harvest. Shavuot, also called Pentecost (or the 50th day), is all about the harvest. God has changed this festival. It no longer is about the harvest of grain but now is about the harvest of souls. We are those workers called and sent to do that work. To bring God's Word to all people.

Now let's get to that Seder game. In that Seder game the child is offered their very own copy of the Bible. The reason they haggle for something else is because they know in 50 days, at the festival of Shavuot (of Pentecost), they will get that Bible anyway. That is an ancient Jewish tradition, to give children a copy of the Word of God. Just as God gave His Word, and brought to us the birth of the holy Christian Church, through the giving of that Word first delivered by Peter, so even still today the Word is given.

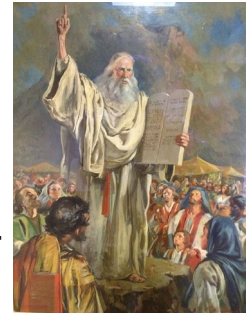
We have a tradition here at St. John's. A tradition I changed a little bit this year. It is a tradition of giving God's Word to children. The changes I've made include when we do that, and at what age. We will now do that each year on Pentecost. We will give God's Word on the day God gave His new saving Word. On this day we will give the saving words of the Bible, as we help parents instill these truths in their children. Because these children are part of that harvest. It was Jesus who said:

Do not hinder children from coming to Me!
Children like these are part of God's kingdom.⁸

Every person in this church, and every thing we plan and do in this church, from every individual, to every board and committee, should gear their efforts towards bringing God's Word to, not just people inside these walls, but up and down every street in Austin, and then as far as we can reach.

That starts at home with your children. God Himself taught us, as He spoke through Moses, with these words:

Listen,... The LORD is our God. The LORD is the only God. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words that I give you today. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you're at home or away, when you lie down or get up. Write them down, and tie them around your wrist, and wear them as headbands as a reminder. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.⁹



We do that in our homes, then at our church, then in the community, and then as far out as we can reach. Just like Jesus taught when He said:

You will be my witnesses to testify about me in Jerusalem,
throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.¹⁰

For us that is:

... in Austin, throughout Mower county, and Minnesota, and to the
ends of the Earth.

8 Matthew 19:14

9 Deuteronomy 6:4-9

10 Acts 1:8

By God's good grace, and our adherence to His Holy Word, we ask our Lord to bless these Bibles and those who read them. By God's good grace we ask our Lord to bless this church with faithful members who have a heart for bringing the Gospel, the Good News, of Jesus to all people. By God's good grace we pray that all who visit our 'holy house to offer here their worship and praise,¹¹' would know that here the Truth is given freely to all, and all are welcome. By God's good grace we pray for 'the unity of all.'¹² That all here would be of one mind to help this congregation grow by bringing in those people we do not yet know, because strangers are only friends not yet met. By God's good grace I pray each of us would hear the Words of Jesus when He said:

Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do everything I have commanded you.¹³

This congregation solidifies their own future by beginning that process in teaching the children who are the future of this church. We will do some small part of that today by putting God's Sacred Holy Words into their hands.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

11 Lutheran Service Book – Divine service I, p. 153

12 Lutheran Service Book – Divine service I, p. 152

13 Matthew 28:19-20