# We are the Laborers!

Sermon Preached by Rev. Chuck Cole 05/31/2020

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# Acts 2:1-21 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

### The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

### Peter Addresses the Crowd

14 But 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. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16 No, 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.

18

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,

in those days I will pour out my Spirit;

and they shall prophesy.

19

And I will show portents in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,

blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

20

The sun shall be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

21

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

Today is Pentecost Sunday and so our text for today is the wonderful crazy beautiful story of the first Pentecost after Christ rose and ascended.

The disciples after seeing Jesus ascend into heaven devoted themselves to worship, praise and prayer.

The feast of Pentecost also called the Festival of Weeks arrives and the city of Jerusalem is flooded with Jews from all over the world to celebrate two main things.

First the scriptural command in the Bible that establishes the fast of Weeks commands it as a celebration of the All Important wheat Harvest in Palestine. So it is a Harvest celebration especially for the Jews who resided in Palestine. They came to celebrate again God’s faithfulness in providing for them in the land..

They also came to celebrate the second purpose for the festival which was a celebration of the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, the Law to Moses, on Mount Sinai. This was a celebration like the Passover of national identity. The Passover celebrated the Lord making them a free people through miracles the Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks celebrated them being made into a very unique and distinct people with the blessing of the Law. It was a celebration of a different kind of harvest, remembering that they were gathered together as a truly unique people with a distinct purpose as a nation in the giving of the Law.

In the Feast of Weeks they were celebrating God’s abundance physically and spiritually and remembering who they were as a people both having been freed by the Grace of God through the blood of the Passover Lamb and then made a people meant to be witnesses of Him to the nations.

The people are gathered in Jerusalem and God sends the Holy Spirit on the Disciples who begin speaking in multiple languages and then Peter speaks beginning a new harvest.

The Holy Spirit comes upon them and they begin to tell of the Glorious deeds of God in the native languages of the people gathered there. The people are stunned because they can tell these people are Galileans - Galileans were thought of as rural hicks and so they should not have been able to speak all these languages. Some accuse them of being drunk which would seem to make no sense - maybe they cannot understand them for some reason we do not know.

But then Peter begins to speak and he quotes the prophet Joel about the Day of the Lord and he says look this is the day of Harvest, this is the Glorious Day of the Lord. Call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

Next week we will see more of his speech which focuses on Christ, who they killed, as Messiah calling all present to join in his Kingdom saying “all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved”. He is saying look this is a new Day of Harvest by Grace, just like the wheat is brought in, just like Israel was created when the Law was given, so today call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

As we will see next week after he explains this in more detail 3,000 from all over the world are baptized and in this a new harvest is made and a new people created the church the Ekklesia - those called out for a purpose - in this case to be laborers in the Harvest that has begun.

God on that day created for himself a multinational, multi-linguistic missional people.

In Pentecost we celebrate the harvest the Lord has brought about bringing people into his Kingdom. We also celebrate the fact that we are the new people created that day, we are the church, the laborers sent out into the harvest.

In Luke 10 Jesus said to his disciples

2 He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Today we celebrate the beginning of the Harvest and the Birth of the fruit of their prayer the Church. Jesus prayed for us, the disciples prayed for us. The church through the ages has prayed for us so that we would be a witness to this generation and for us to be the laborers we are called to be.

We are the gathered and gatherers of the Harvest. That is what the church is.

We are a labor force for gathering people to the Kingdom. Pentecost we celebrate the beginning of that task.

The people gathered that day in Jerusalem were gathered into the Kingdom, the loving arms of the Father by the witness of the disciples but then after a time of preparation they went home and shared the Good News with others planting the seeds of the church.

We are as the church the laborers the Lord has sent into the Harvest. The question is not who are we - we are the laborers- and that is something to celebrate but what does faithfulness look like.

First it is Worship - Give thanks to God that we are who we are in him. Let us give God praise that we get to be a part of gathering in his Harvest of grace and love. What a blessing it is we are his people by the miraculous outpouring of his grace and that is worthy of celebrating.

We sing and pray and lift up the truth to praise the Lord but also essentially to remember who we are the Pentecost people.

At the end of our service we will sing -I am the church, you are the church we are the church together all who follow Jesus all around the world yes we are the church together.

The last verse says - At Pentecost some people received the Holy Spirit and told the Good News through the world to all who would hear it.

We are those Pentecost people. We are the ones we will sing about we are the laborers who have told and are telling the Good News to all who would hear it.

That is who we are.

What an example of grace an unearned blessing that he has poured out on us. So let us give him thanks.

Along with giving him thanks, and remembering who we are let us also pray for the laborers for each of us and for the church as a whole. Let us ask God to recommit us in this time to this purpose.

In the life of St. John’s several opportunities for us to live out this calling were about to unfold prior to the shut-down that has resulted from the pandemic.

Let us pray that those opportunities may be taken up when we return but let us also pray for new and unfolding opportunities with friends and neighbors.

When we gather in person again let us not lose sight of this purpose. We are if you will a mission society a collection of Witnesses to the Gospel. This is the central purpose of the church of who we are. It is easy at various times and places to forget this but this should be the basis for all our decision making.

We are a people with a message to proclaim relevant to these trying days.

The Lord of the Universe is an active passionate God who is love. Each and every person is made in his image and is equally loved by him. All of us though are apart from him because of sin - in all its forms - but he desires for each one of us to return to him. He loved each of us so much that he became a human being and died for us that we might know Him and his love again that each and every one of us might be restored to the full humanity we were intended to have. No exceptions.

God loves the peaceful protester, and the vandal trying to stir things up for their own purposes and the criminal who is just taking advantage of the situation. God loves and wants to restore the victim of injustice, the perpetrator and the indifferent. God loves the poor being devastated by the pandemic, those who are using the suffering for their purposes and those who do not care. That is wonderful news.

We are the laborers in the harvest.

Let us rejoice and worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ asking to be molded and shaped into his witnesses in all that we do into the people of God the laborers in the harvest. Amen.