

Mission Statement EVERYONE

OUR MISSION

"Because God has shown us Love and Forgiveness in Christ, we Welcome EVERYONE to experience His Compassion."

Today is Pentecost Sunday.

The significance of Pentecost parallels that of Christmas and Easter.

Christmas and Easter are the work of the Father and the Spirit through the Son.

Pentecost is the work of the Father and the Son through their Spirit.

As I said, the significance of this day equals that of Christmas and Easter.

You wouldn't know it, however, by the way the Church responds to Pentecost.

Did you know today was Pentecost Sunday before you arrived?

Do you know what Pentecost Sunday celebrates?

We shouldn't be too hard on ourselves perhaps.

Jesus gave His disciples only 10 days to prepare for Pentecost.

On Pentecost the promised Holy Spirit was to be poured out.

The New Testament Pentecost is a birthday celebration.

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church, the Body of Christ.

Ezekiel prophesied about this day.

God will put a new Spirit into the lives of the faithful.

God's Spirit transforms the heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

That new heart would be a place for the Spirit to dwell (Ez. 36:27).

The prophet Joel saw the Spirit's coming.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and the maidservants in those days, I will pour out My Spirit." (Joel 2:28-29)

God saw the day when everyone would be touched by His Spirit.

The celebration of Pentecost began however, as an Old Testament celebration.

It dates back to the time of Moses.

It was the celebration of the harvest.

And it happened 50 days after the Passover.

At the Passover the first cut of the barley crop was sacrificed to God.

On Pentecost the first cut of the wheat was an offering to the Lord.

Pentecost was also known as the Feast of First Fruits.

Pentecost was a feast of joy and thanksgiving to God for His supply.

And it was a feast for everyone.

The poor, the stranger, and the Levite were invited.

Everyone was welcome to the feast of Pentecost.

How appropriate that this word "Everyone" from our Mission Statement is today.

Pentecost was for everyone.

It was a day of welcome to all.

Wouldn't it be great if every time we celebrated Pentecost we were reminded?

An annual reminder that our Church is here for everyone would keep us focused.

The OT Pentecost was an invitation to all to celebrate God's harvest.

It was celebrating the harvest of barley and wheat - God's provision.

The OT Pentecost celebrated the physical harvest of crops.

The NT Pentecost celebrated the spiritual harvest of people.

It was the celebration of the harvest of people into God's Kingdom.

Jesus gathered His disciples together after His resurrection.

Since the resurrection, Jesus had been with them for forty days.

There was no doubt in any of their minds that Jesus was back from the dead.

He proved Himself to them over and over again.

Luke writes in verse 3, **"He presented Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God."**

Jesus' final instructions to the disciples are found in verse 4.

"He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father."

The promise they were to wait for was the baptizing presence of the Holy Spirit.

That promise was given to those who believe in Jesus.

The baptizing presence of the Holy Spirit is not for the non-believer.

He is given for the person of faith.

It is universally agreed that Pentecost was the birth of the Church.

It's like the disciples were in the womb of Jesus.

New life was conceived through faith in Him.

A new life, a spiritual life was stirring in them.

They had tasted the love and forgiveness of God in a new way.

But they hadn't been delivered from the sinful nature.

Jesus said to them, "Stay in Jerusalem, stay in the womb.

"Remain in Me until you are delivered by My Spirit.

"When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power.

"His power will give you abundant, victorious life.

"His power will transform the way you live.

"He will liberate you from the sinful nature.

"The sin causing the civil war within you will be defeated.

"His power will enable you to be My witnesses.

"Wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

"Don't abort your obedience to this command.

"And don't move pre-maturely and try to go on your own.

"The Holy Spirit will come if you wait in Jerusalem."

So that is what they did.

And 10 days later, 50 days after the resurrection, Pentecost came.

The day of harvest, and the day the promised Holy Spirit was poured out.

He was the One who would empower the disciples to be Jesus' witnesses.

They were to witness in Jerusalem, all Judea, all Samaria, and all the earth.

The ability to welcome everyone is not a natural ability.

We cannot do that in our own strength.

We will have no interest in doing that.

We will prefer to keep Jesus to ourselves.

Without the Spirit we won't share Jesus dynamically with our world.

Witnessing and welcoming are the result of the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Through the Holy Spirit we have the vision and power to witness.

Jesus wanted His disciples to see the harvest around them.

The disciples had never seen the harvest before.

All they saw were people who were different from them and that they hated.

Jesus saw people who needed Him and who He loved.

A faithful, Spirit-filled Church reveals Jesus to the world.

Jesus wants us to welcome everyone.

Let's look at the disciples' "Samaritans" that Jesus wants us to welcome.

There was no love lost between the 12 sons of Jacob who was later named Israel.

Those 12 sons eventually became the 12 tribes of Israel.

They each had to have their own territory in the Promised Land of Canaan.

They couldn't co-mingle with each other but had their God-given borders.

King David had been able to unite all the tribes in one kingdom.

Jerusalem had been established as the capital of David's united kingdom.

Solomon reigned after David and built the Temple in Jerusalem.

That is where Yahweh was worshipped.

But Solomon sinned against God and after His death the kingdom divided.

Two kings reigned so the 12 tribes split into 2 kingdoms.

Two tribes formed the southern kingdom of Judah.

Ten tribes formed the northern kingdom of Israel.

When the division occurred a new northern capital city was created.

The city of Samaria was built to be the capital.

It was destroyed in 722 BC and people exiled.

The north was repopulated with other nations around Samaria.

So Samaria became a territory of mixed races and religions.

When Jerusalem was destroyed the Jews in Samaria still wanted to worship Yahweh.

So they built a new temple on Mt. Gerizim.

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls he met resistance.

The resistance came from Sanballat and Tobiah - Samaritans.

This intensified the tension between Samaria and Judea.

By the time of Jesus the tension had escalated politically and religiously.

Samaria had been annexed into the Province of Syria.

It was an area between the north and south kingdoms.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem south of Samaria.

He grew up in Nazareth north of Samaria.

That is where most of His ministry took place, in Galilee.

Travelers would take the long route from Galilee to Jerusalem.

They would cross the Jordan River twice just to avoid Samaria.

People who lived in Samaria were not respected or liked by anyone.

They were known as inhospitable.

They were people you went out of your way to avoid.

There was no welcome extended.

And that is where Jesus said His disciples must go.

That was not welcome news because the Samaritans hadn't been nice to them.

"When it came close to the time for his Ascension, he gathered up his courage and steeled himself for the journey to Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead. They came to a Samaritan village to make arrangements for his hospitality. But when the Samaritans learned that his destination was Jerusalem, they refused hospitality. When the disciples James and John learned of it, they said, 'Master, do you want us to call a bolt of lightning down out of the sky and incinerate them?' Jesus turned on them: 'Of course not!'" (Luke 9:51-54)

When we are baptized with the fire of the Holy Spirit we don't need lightning.

We have something far greater to offer - Jesus' love and forgiveness.

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Every place was a stretch for the disciples.

They were mostly Galileans so they didn't even care for Jerusalem.

Why would they care for Jerusalem when that is where Jesus was crucified?

Why would they want to cross their borders to go to Syria to the north?

They had been taken captive there.

Why go to the east to Babylon, now Iraq, and even farther east to Iran?

They had been taken captive to Babylon as well.

Why go to Egypt where they had been slaves for 400 years?

Why go west to Greece and Rome?

They were being dominated and influenced by these pagan people.

They didn't deserve Jesus' love and forgiveness.

They lived next door but they were definitely not their neighbor.

Those nations certainly were not worthy to be the harvest field.

They saw Roman soldiers and would spit.

They saw Tax collectors and would spit.

They saw religious hypocrites and would spit.

They saw Samaritans and would spit.

Sort of like Dog River verses Woolerton in Corner Gas
People in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth.
Spit on them, who needs them?

Jesus corrected that attitude.

Who is my neighbor?

Jesus responded to that question with a story we call "the Good Samaritan."

In their thinking there was no such thing as a 'good' Samaritan.

This is how the RSV translates Jesus' words.

"But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."
(Luke 10:33-34)

Jesus amazed His disciples by talking with a woman in Samaria.

Listen to Jesus' words.

"God's way of salvation is made available through the Jews. But the time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you're called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter. It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration. The woman said, 'I don't know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we'll get the whole story.' 'I am he,' said Jesus. 'You don't have to wait any longer or look any further.' Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked. They couldn't believe he was talking with that kind of a woman. No one said what they were all thinking, but their faces showed it."
(John 4:22-27)

How can Jesus expect His disciples to go to the disliked, distrusted, and disloyal?

How can Jesus expect us to welcome everyone?

How can He call us to pour compassion on those who deserve to be hated?

Only through the power of His Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit enables us to be expressions of God's love for this world.

No more looks of disdain.

No more locked doors.

No more longing from a distance.

We can simply and honestly be ourselves and find welcome.

Has the Holy Spirit brought you to that place so Jesus is the Hope of the Nations?

Closing Song Hope of the Nations