

051924 Sermon "Pentecost" Acts 2:1-4

Today is Pentecost Sunday. According to the Gospels, the resurrected Jesus did not immediately ascend into heaven, but He appeared 11 times to his disciples for 40 days after his resurrection. Acts 1:3 reads: "After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." As Jesus ascended into heaven, he said to his disciples, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for what the Father has promised, as you have heard from me." Ten days after Jesus' ascension, on the 50th day after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, and we celebrate this day as Pentecost Sunday.

The Greek word for "Pentecoste" [Pentecoste] means 50, so this day is called Pentecost in English. The reason why Pentecost Sunday is so important in churches today is that this day is the beginning of the church's history. At the same time, we see it as the beginning of Christian mission.

Originally in the Old Testament, Pentecost was named for the 50th day after the first Sabbath after Passover, commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. God told in Exodus 23:17 that every Israelite man must visit the temple in Jerusalem three times a year. Those three times were during the three major holidays of Israel: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacle. Therefore, during these feasts, the Israelites, who were scattered along the Mediterranean countries, gathered with their families to Jerusalem, where the only temple was located.

However, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, did not come to the crowds in Jerusalem, but instead the Holy Spirit came to the 120 people who obeyed the word of Jesus and did not leave Jerusalem and prayed and waited together.

In Acts 2:1, "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place." They were in the same place. In Acts 1:14, it says, "With one accord they continued in prayer"! When is the longest prayer you've ever prayed in your life? They gathered in one place for 10 days and prayed for countless hours, but what were they praying for?

If God already knows everything, why do we need to pray? Even the Bible says, "pray without ceasing!" In our culture, too frequently, prayer is a way to hit the button to get what I want. Prayer is not an attempt to get the goody goodies. Watch out for people who say if you pray this way and that way you get what you want. That's not what the Bible says. Prayer is not a technique to learn to get what I want.

Prayer is an attempt to develop intimacy with God. According to Christ, the purpose of life is to know God to love and worship God and then to love and serve people. So, the purpose of prayer is to get to know God and that's why when you read the Psalms, you'll notice what a struggle prayer is.

Prayer is a real struggle where I as a human being and struggling with God in prayer. In addition, hopefully what I'm learning in prayer is to learn to align my will with God's will. That's Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me yet not my will but your will be done."

In Luke 18, Jesus told the parable of the widow and the unjust judge to teach us that we should always pray and not lose heart. In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. Even though he was a judge, the Bible says he was unjust. He was probably a man who gave special treatment to those who had wealth and power, and simply ignored the poor and powerless. In that city a powerless and helpless widow came to him and asked for help, but he refused. Still, the widow kept coming and asking for help. The judge, who did not fear God and was unjust, nevertheless ends up hearing what the widow has to say, so that he doesn't have to hear any more of her request.

We often hear how we draw conclusions from this story, that if we strongly demand from God and pray persistently, God will hear us. Does this parable really mean that? Because the unjust judge did not want to be bothered and listened to the widow's petition, does God hear our prayers because he does not want to be bothered? No! Absolutely, not! In order to interpret this parable rightly, we need to start by thinking again about why Jesus gave this parable.

Verse 1 says, "Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray

always and not to lose heart.” That's the purpose of this parable! He's going to tell us why we should always pray and not lose heart. To lose heart is the Greek word for [ekkakeo], which means ‘to get tired, to be discouraged, to lose energy’. Friends, we get tired too easily on many occasions, right? We lose energy too easily in our worldly affairs as well as in spiritual matters. When things go well according to your plan, you sing of the good God, but when you encounter difficult situations, your hearts get tired easily. And then stop praying.

We were often taught to pray passionately, risking our lives, but if you look closely, in reality, such a prayer is not a prayer to know Heavenly Father's will, but a prayer to only reveal our will to God, and there are many times when our prayers are forcing our requests on God. In this respect, this parable is not the perseverance of a widow who goes to the judge and asks for it, nor is it a very long and passionate prayer to fulfill your heart's desires.

The meaning of this parable is that the unjust judge reluctantly grants the widow's repeated requests, but God, the righteous judge, and your Heavenly Father, faithfully answers the prayers of his children. The reason God hears our prayers is not because we pray persistently and we pray for a long time like 10 days. Because God answers the prayers of his children, we must continue to pray, trusting in God as our good Heavenly Father and not becoming discouraged.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, through Pentecost, may we live in the presence of God. May you know and grow closer to God through prayer. And hopefully, in the process, you'll learn to align your will with God's will. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.