

**Acts 2:1–21; Numbers 11:24–30; Psalm 104:24–34, 35b; 1 Corinthians 12:3b–13; John 20:19–23; John 7:37–39**

## Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, breathe your peace upon us. Holy Spirit, open our hearts, cleanse our desires, and form us into a holy people. Make Christ visible in us. Speak, Lord. We are listening. Amen.

## Scripture Reading

Friends, please open your Bibles to **Acts 2:1–21**. If you do not have a Bible with you, you are welcome to grab a pew Bible in front of you.

Today, on the Day of Pentecost, we begin by hearing the story that stands at the center of this morning's message.

**Read Acts 2:1–21 aloud.**

After reading, **show slide:**

**Leader:** These are the words of God for the people of God.

**Congregation:** Praise be to God.

## Opener

Friends, when we hear the story of Pentecost, we often remember the sound, the wind, the fire, and the languages.

And we should.

Acts tells us there was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind. There were what seemed to be tongues of fire resting on each of them. People from many nations heard the wonders of God in their own languages. It was public. It was visible. It was powerful. It was not quiet in the corner.

So, yes, Pentecost sends the church into public witness.

But if we are not careful, we may think Pentecost is mainly about God making the church louder.

And that is not quite right.

Pentecost is not merely God making the church louder. Pentecost is God putting the life of Jesus in ordinary people. By the Spirit, God's holy presence rests on ordinary believers and forms them into a holy people.

## Introduction

So get this:

**The Spirit does not merely make us louder; the Spirit makes Jesus visible in us.**

That is the line I want us to carry today.

Because there is a difference between **noise without Christ** and **witness full of Christ**.

Noise without Christ can be religious. Noise without Christ can be busy. Noise without Christ can have opinions, slogans, programs, signs, committees, and even correct words.

But witness full of Christ carries peace into fear, forgiveness into brokenness, truth into confusion, courage into silence, and holy love into ordinary life.

And maybe that is where Pentecost needs to speak to the church again.

We know something has changed in the religious life of our country. Gallup, Pew, and Barna have all named what many churches already feel: religious affiliation, membership, attendance rhythms, and the perceived importance of faith have changed over the past generation.[1] But membership numbers measure affiliation; they do not measure the movement of the Spirit.

Decline does not mean the Spirit has left.

Holding steady does not automatically mean the church is healthy.

Growth does not always mean faithfulness.

The Spirit may be present in growth, but the Spirit may also be present in exposure, pruning, repentance, and renewal.

So the question is not only, “How do we get people back into the building?” That question matters, but it is not deep enough.

The deeper question is this:

**When people encounter us, can they recognize Jesus?**

## MAIN POINT

Because the church is often audible, but not always recognizable as Jesus.

People have heard the church explain Jesus. What they are aching to see is a people who embody Jesus.

That does not mean doctrine does not matter. It means doctrine must become flesh. Holiness must become visible. Love must become public. Forgiveness must become practiced. Peace

must become relational. Truth must become trustworthy. The Gospel of God must become a way of life.

Our lives are our witness.

That is Pentecost.

In Numbers 11, Moses is weary. The burden of leadership is heavy. The people are complaining, and the community is anxious. The need is too large for one person to carry.

So, God takes some of the Spirit that is on Moses and places that Spirit on the elders. They begin to prophesy.

But then two men, Eldad and Medad, prophesy in the camp. They are not where everyone expects them to be. They are not inside the official circle. Joshua gets concerned and says, in effect, “Moses, stop them.”

But Moses says, “I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them” (Numbers 11:29, NIV).

That is the holy longing before Pentecost.

Moses is saying, “I wish this were not limited to one leader. I wish this were not held by one office. I wish this holy presence rested on all God’s people.”

And in Acts 2, that longing is fulfilled.

Luke tells us, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4, NIV).

All of them.

Not just Peter. Not just the apostles. Not just the gifted speakers. Not just the leaders. Not just the impressive ones.

The Spirit rests on ordinary people.

Pentecost is the day the fire does not stay on the altar. The fire rests on the people.

That matters.

Because we still sometimes act as if the life of the church is carried by a few people. A few leaders. A few volunteers. A few teachers. A few planners. A few “spiritual” ones.

But Pentecost says no.

The Spirit is poured out on sons and daughters, young and old, women and men, servants and leaders, quiet people and bold people, the ones in the room and the ones in the camp.

The Spirit does not create spiritual celebrities. The Spirit forms a holy people.

That is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7, NIV).

Not for private importance.

Not for spiritual status.

Not so we can admire ourselves.

For the common good.

The Spirit rests on each one for the sake of the whole body.

So Pentecost is not just about speech. It is about shared life.

It is not just about fire. It is about formation.

It is not just about being heard. It is about making Jesus visible.

## Take Away

**The Spirit does not merely make us louder; the Spirit makes Jesus visible in us.**

Psalm 104 gives us another angle. The psalmist looks at creation and sees everything depending on the breath and Spirit of God. The animals, the sea, the living things both large and small — all of it is sustained by God’s giving presence.

Then the psalm says, “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground” (Psalm 104:30, NIV).

The Spirit renews what has grown weary.

That is not only true for creation. It is true for the church.

The Spirit renews what has grown tired, dry, anxious, and self-protective. The Spirit renews people who have been running on fumes. The Spirit renews churches that have become more concerned with survival than witness. The Spirit renews hearts that have settled for attendance instead of obedience.

But renewal is not always comfortable.

Sometimes renewal looks like fresh joy.

Sometimes renewal looks like conviction.

Sometimes renewal looks like grief over what we have neglected.

Sometimes renewal looks like being moved out of the room and into the need.

Jesus says in John 7, “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them” (John 7:38, NIV).

Living water does not stay still.

It flows.

And this is where we need to be careful. Because we can talk about the Spirit in a way that stays very private. We can talk about the Spirit as a feeling, an inspiration, a comfort, a warmth, an inward experience.

And yes, the Spirit comforts. Yes, the Spirit speaks inwardly. Yes, the Spirit ministers to the heart.

But the Spirit also moves.

The Spirit flows outward.

The Spirit makes love public.

The Spirit makes holiness visible.

The Spirit forms a people who show up when love is needed.

That is not guilt-driven or shame-driven busyness. The Spirit is not asking us to become frantic rescuers. But Pentecost does move us. Pentecost moves us from wind and fire into Monday morning, hospital rooms, funeral dinners, tired families, lonely people, anxious meetings, and ordinary acts of inconvenient love.

The Spirit does not merely make us louder; the Spirit makes Jesus visible in us.

## Illustration

Let me tell it this way.

There was a church that wanted people to know they cared.

So they put a beautiful sign out front. It said:

**Everyone Welcome.  
Come as You Are.  
We Care About You.**

And it was a good sign. The words were true. The people meant them.

Inside the church, they had classes about caring. They had meetings about outreach. They had committees about hospitality. They had plans, calendars, sign-up sheets, and good intentions.

But one evening, while the church was having a class on how to love their neighbors, a woman sat down on the front steps outside.

She had nowhere else to go that night. She was tired. She was embarrassed. She did not know who to ask. She had seen the sign, so she sat under it.

Inside, the class kept going.

They were talking about compassion.

They were talking about how Jesus welcomed people.

They were talking about how the church needed to be more visible in the community.

Then one person looked out the window and saw her.

At first, he thought, *Someone should do something.*

Then he thought, *Maybe I should tell the pastor.*

Then he thought, *This is not really a good time. We are in the middle of class.*

But something in him would not let him stay seated.

So he stepped out of the room, walked down the hallway, opened the door, and sat beside her on the steps.

He did not start with a speech. He did not ask for a report. He did not try to fix her whole life in five minutes.

He simply said, "I am glad you came here."

Then he brought her something warm to drink. Someone else brought a blanket. Someone else made a phone call. Someone else stayed with her while help was arranged.

Later that night, someone asked him, "Why did you leave the class?"

And he said, "Because what we were studying was sitting on the steps."

That is Pentecost.

Not just words in the building.

Not just a sign out front.

Not just a class about love.

But the Spirit moving ordinary people out of the room and into the need.

**Friends, Spirit-filled witness is love that shows up before it is convenient.**

## Concluding

That is not guilt-driven or shame-driven busyness. The Spirit is not asking us to become frantic rescuers. But Pentecost does move us. It moves us from wind and fire into Monday morning, hospital rooms, funeral dinners, tired families, lonely people, anxious meetings, and ordinary acts of inconvenient love.

To be a follower of Christ is more than attending worship, holding a title, serving on a committee, or saying the right words about Jesus. To be a follower of Christ means we learn to show up when holy love calls. We do what is needed without needing praise. We serve without needing to be glorified. We become present when the need is real, even when the timing is inconvenient.

- Sometimes that means giving our time.
- Sometimes it means giving up rest.
- Sometimes it means setting aside our routine.
- Sometimes it means choosing love over comfort.

But that is where Jesus becomes visible.

Not in religious noise. Not in spiritual performance. But in ordinary people filled with the Spirit, quietly becoming the hands and feet of Christ when life is needed.

That is not guilt.

That is holiness.

Holiness is not self-improvement. Holiness is life in Christ, by the Spirit, forming a people who live in faithful obedience, inward surrender, outward witness, and holy love. This is not God handing us a heavier burden. This is Christ sharing his life with us by the Spirit.

And that is why John 20 matters so much.

The disciples are behind locked doors. They are afraid. They are not impressive. They are not bold. They are not ready to launch a movement. They are frightened people in a closed room.

And the risen Jesus comes to them. He speaks peace. He shows them his wounds.

Then he says, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21, NIV).

And then he breathes on them. Jesus does not shame them for being afraid. He does not say, “What is wrong with you people?” He does not say, “You should be stronger by now.”

He breathes peace into them and sends them.

### **That is Pentecost before Pentecost.**

The risen Christ gives frightened people holy breath. And that breath becomes witness.

- Not frantic witness.
- Not anxious witness.
- Not self-preserving witness.
- Spirit-filled witness.

So what needs changed?

- Not the gospel.
- Not the central claim that Jesus is Lord.
- Not holiness.
- Not Scripture.
- Not worship.

What needs changed is the church's posture.

- From self-preservation to Spirit-filled witness.
- From "come help us survive" to "come see Christ among us."
- From "we need more people in the building" to "we need more of Jesus visible in the people."
- From church as religious attendance to church as holy presence.
- From noise without Christ to witness full of Christ.

Friends, the world does not simply need a louder church.

The world needs a church that sounds like Jesus, forgives like Jesus, tells the truth like Jesus, and shows up like Jesus.

This is where Friends theology, holiness, and the Gospel of God come together beautifully.

Christ is present by the Spirit.

The Light is not just around us. Christ is at work within us.

The Spirit does not simply stir emotion. The Spirit forms holy love.

So when the Spirit opens our eyes to a need, we listen.

When the Spirit stirs compassion, we move.

When the Spirit shows us a person sitting on the steps, we do not wait for someone else to become the church.

- We become present.
- We become prayerful.
- We become steady.
- We become helpful.
- We become love with hands and feet.

Pentecost is not merely God making the church louder. Pentecost is God putting the life of Jesus in ordinary people. By the Spirit, God's holy presence rests on ordinary believers and forms them into a holy people.

## Conclusion

So, Friends, receive the breath. Receive the fire. Receive the living water. Receive the peace of Christ.

And then follow when holy love calls. Because the Spirit does not merely make us louder. **The Spirit makes Jesus visible in us.** Amen.

## Footnotes

[1] Jeffrey M. Jones, “U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time,” *Gallup*, March 29, 2021; Gregory A. Smith et al., “Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off,” *Pew Research Center*, February 26, 2025; Barna Group, “Faith’s Shrinking Influence: What 25 Years of Data Reveals,” *Barna*, December 10, 2025. Gallup reported that membership in houses of worship fell from 70% in 1999 to 47% in 2020; Pew’s 2023–24 Religious Landscape Study reported that the long decline in Christian affiliation may have slowed or leveled off; and Barna’s 25-year view reports declines in Christian identity, monthly church attendance, evangelism priority, and the perceived importance of faith. Barna also notes a hopeful but complicated recent trend: younger adults are showing renewed churchgoing patterns, while overall attendance rhythms remain less frequent than many churches assume.

[2] Paul N. Anderson, “A Theology of Presence,” *Evangelical Friend* 26, no. 6 (July/August 1993). Anderson’s theology of presence is useful here: God’s deepest gift is not merely explanation or success, but God’s saving and healing presence made available through Christ and poured out by the Spirit.

[3] Paul N. Anderson, “Primitive Christianity Revived—The Original Quaker Vision,” *Quaker Religious Thought* 131 (2018): 5–6. Anderson argues that early Friends understood their calling as the recovery of apostolic Christianity and sought to be “Friends of Jesus.”