

Getting Your Attention  
The Day of Pentecost  
Acts 2:1-21  
May 28, 2023

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”.

#### I. Introduction

Fifty years ago Mrs. Eilers was sitting at her desk, correcting papers, when she looked up at the clock on the wall and saw it was time for the children to come in from recess. Some were playing behind the school on the swing set. Others were over behind the church next door. Still others were playing hopscotch on the sidewalk in front of the school. She needed to get their attention. She needs to save her voice so she can teach the children, so she uses a bell like this one (ring bell) Did that get your attention?

Today is Pentecost. We remember this day as the special day when God the Holy Spirit got the attention of His people.

2. How did the Holy Spirit get their attention? — not with a bell. But in three different ways the Holy Spirit got the attention of people that day.

A. First, there was wind and fire. Jesus had told his disciples that after he left them they would not go back to their occupations, but would be his witnesses (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth). But they would need a leader, a Counsellor. He would send them the Counsellor, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit. They were to go back to Jerusalem and wait for his arrival. But how would they know he had come to them? He made himself known through wind and fire. We are told: “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.”

When God wants to make His presence known, He is loud and bright. When He appeared to the Children of Israel on Mt. Sinai after the Exodus, the Lord came with a loud trumpet sound, and with smoke and fire. God wants His people both to hear and see what He is about to do!

B. He also gets their attention by giving the Apostles the special ability to speak in different languages. You see, the Holy Spirit also wanted to get the attention of the people in Jerusalem. It was Pentecost. Thousands and thousands had come for the harvest festival. They had come from many different countries and nationalities (there were Parthians and Medes, Elamites and Mesopotamians, people from Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia. Some had come from Phrygia and Pamphylia and Egypt and Libya, others from Rome. There were Jews and converts to Judaism, Arabs and people from the Island of Crete. God the Holy Spirit wanted all these people to hear the Gospel — that good news that Jesus had suffered, died and rose again to make them God’s own people. How would he get their attention? Well, he gave the disciples the special ability to speak in these very languages that they had never learned before.

The great miracle of the Tower of Babel was revisited! There, you will remember, all people spoke the same language. In their pride they determined to build a great tower that would reach the heavens and make a name for themselves. This action was to rival and displace the need for God. So the Lord took action. "Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech...and from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth."

But now, at Pentecost, the Lord wants all people to hear and understand what He has done. So the Apostles can communicate clearly in each person's own language. "How is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God"

C. The third way the Holy Spirit gets their attention is by the Preaching of the Gospel. Now that the Holy Spirit got the attention of their minds, how would he get the attention of their hearts? It is one thing to get people's attention by doing something flashy, something exciting, something powerful or colorful, but it's another thing to get the attention of their hearts -- or to change their hearts. The Holy Spirit used the words of Peter — Peter's sermon. They were words that spoke two messages: the message of Law and the message of Gospel. Let's see what those two messages were.

#### 1. The message of the Law — "You put him to death"!

Peter is probably speaking in the courtyard of the Temple. He knows that among his audience are those people who made up the bloodthirsty mob of Good Friday who demanded Jesus' crucifixion. Perhaps some were the temple guard who had arrested Jesus in Gethsemane. Perhaps some were the witnesses who gave false testimony against Jesus at his trial. Maybe others were among those bullied by the priests and pharisees to shout for Jesus crucifixion. Peter doesn't shrink from telling them the truth: they put to death the innocent Son of God.

"Men of Israel", Peter says, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know — this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." Peter's words are words of judgement, words of law.

#### 2. But Peter used a second message to reach the hearts of the people that day -- The message of the Gospel — "But God raised him to life"

You see, the law can only condemn the sinner. But Peter goes on to proclaim the good news, Gospel news. He who was crucified was handed over to them by God's own set purpose and foreknowledge. And now He has been raised to life just as King David had prophesied — set free from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. Furthermore, He has now been exalted to the right hand of God where he reigns as Lord of all!

#### 3. The Holy Spirit got the attention of their hearts through the preaching of God's Word.

And the people responded to the preached word with hearts that were now turned to God: "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter told them to repent and be baptized so that their sins could be forgiven and they too could receive the Holy Spirit. And that's what happened that day — 3,000 were baptized. A little while later we are told that the number grew to 5,000... and then we are told that every day more and

more were being added because of the preaching of the apostles. God the Holy Spirit continued to actively change hearts through the power of the Gospel.

3. Your heart has already been changed by the preaching of the Law and Gospel. The Holy Spirit got your attention with water and the word. — not a noisy, clanging bell, but the gentle sound of water running off your head and into a basin. There God changed you so you became His person. Are you still his person?

A. Sometimes you might not feel like it. You may feel that God has abandoned you. You worked hard for him, but somehow he has let some hurt or trouble come into your life. You may feel you are walking alone.

B. More likely, it is you who has abandoned God — disobeying his commandments, breaking faith with God, living for yourself.

C. But the truth is, God has not abandoned you. In your hurt and trouble He is still with you. Even in your disobedience, he does not abandon you. He loves you still. He calls you to return to him in faith. The Holy Spirit continues to work today to restore and renew the faith of God's people. This morning He is doing it through the preaching of his word (and in a few minutes He will do the same thing through the body and blood of Jesus given and shed for you).

#### 4. Conclusion

Dear friends in Christ, God the Holy Spirit wants your attention. He has much to teach you. He is the Spirit of Truth who will lead you into the truth about your disobedience. He is the Counsellor who will comfort and guide you when you are lost and alone. He has called you to faith and is working so hard to keep you strong in faith, pointing you again and again to Jesus Christ, your Savior.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.