



<http://video.pbs.org/video/2155873888>

Pray the Devil Back To Hell

## PENTECOST

**Sunday, May 19, 2013**

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The unit you are viewing, Pentecost, is a compact unit. This means that it is not a complete commentary of the Scripture(s) selected for this day on the calendar, nor does it have a full, supporting cultural resource unit and worship unit. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided a sermonic outline, songs, suggested books, and suggested articles, links, and videos. For additional information, see Pentecost in the archives of the Lectionary for 2009–2011.

### **I. Description of the Liturgical Moment**

The Day of Pentecost is a feast day of the Church. It takes place fifty days after Easter and is the culmination of what we celebrate at the resurrection. During biblical times, on this day Jews came from all over to Jerusalem for the Festival of Weeks. It was originally an agricultural festival celebrating the spring harvest.

In Acts 2, which so many relate with Pentecost, the disciples and many other followers of Jesus are present as the room fills with sound and then wind. Jesus' followers begin to proclaim God's mighty acts in many different languages that all those gathered can understand. They have received what Jesus had promised—the necessary and powerful gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a dramatic event that signals a change from the early Church hiding in fear, to the Church asking for the power to speak boldly about the goodness of God that comes through Jesus the Christ (Acts 4:29).

Modernly, on this Sunday the Church is dressed in bright red as a symbol of the fire of the Holy Spirit. Some congregations even inflate red balloons to symbolize the birthday of the Christian

Church. Another way to visually portray the coming of the Holy Spirit and the gifts she brings is to line up seven red candles. Each candle then represents a gift of the Spirit.

With this as the backdrop, a sermon outline for Pentecost 2013 follows.

## **II. Pentecost: Sermonic Outline**

### **A. Sermonic Focus Text(s): Acts 2:1-21 and Acts 4:27-31 (New Revised Standard Version)**

#### **Acts: 2:1-21**

(v.1) When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. (v. 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. (v. 3) Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. (v. 4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

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

(v. 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. (v. 15) Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. (v. 16) No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

(v. 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.

(v. 18) Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

(v. 19) And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

(v. 20) The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.  
(v. 21) Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

### **Acts 4:27-31**

(v. 27) “For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, (v. 28) to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (v. 29) And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, (v. 30) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” (v. 31) When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

### **B. Possible Titles**

- i. The Power to Speak
- ii. What Can Happen When We Pray
- iii. Come Holy Spirit, Come

### **C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry**

In the very beginnings of the Church, those who follow Jesus are experiencing persecution. Often when we pray we are asking God to remove us from a troubled situation. We are calling for God to take us out of harm's way. This is not what the apostles do. The apostles do not pray for their persecution to end or for their trouble to be no more. Instead they pray for the ability to speak the word of God (Acts 4:29). The apostles pray for the boldness to respond to all that they have endured. Yet, their prayer does not end. They also pray for the power of God to heal, and for the signs and wonders of God to be seen in this situation (Acts 4:30).

The apostles, very new in their experience of what God has done through Jesus, are nonetheless counting on all that they have seen and all that they have heard to be true. The apostles pray for the power of God's Holy Spirit to fill them and to empower them. As they pray, the Church is built and the world is changed. As we exegete this text modernly, shall we preach to hearers that instead of asking for removal from harm, they should be asking for boldness to speak about God; that they should ask for the power to heal, and for signs and wonders to be seen in their situation? Are we scripturally correct if we tell today's disciples that they should pray for the power to heal and for signs and wonders to occur as they testify about Christ?

### **III. Introduction**

It had been quite an ordeal for the apostles. They were in the beginning days of a movement. Just days before they had experienced the powerful move of God. They had received the Holy Spirit. Now, they were preaching and teaching and gathering, telling all who would listen of what God

had done through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. They spoke of how his death and resurrection was to usher in the kingdom. The apostles spoke out boldly and called on the name of Jesus to help and to heal. The more they talked about what Jesus had done, the more the rulers, elders, and scribes harassed them. The more they spoke out, the more they were persecuted. Yet they would not stop proclaiming the goodness of God. They were arrested, threatened, and warned. So they did the one thing they knew how to do: they prayed, petitioned, and asked for God's boldness to speak and for more signs and wonders from God.

In Liberia, it had been quite an ordeal. The women of Liberia were tired; they were fed up. They could not feed their children. The community was in turmoil. Boys who were not yet out of puberty were being fed drugs and hyped up so that they were violent and dangerous. They were the soldiers; they were the ones who were sent out by warring factions. These young boys wreaked havoc on the communities. Whole families were slaughtered, daughters were raped. Persecution, death, and destruction had become a normal part of their lives. Something had to be done. So the women organized using protest and prayers for peace. These women (Christian and Muslim), led by Noble Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee, prayed for the boldness to speak, to act, and to put an end to the civil war in Liberia. This was their Pentecost stand. They wanted peace, not persecution. They wanted calm, not a country in turmoil. They wanted their children to live in peace, not be raped and/or turned into child soldiers. So they prayed and marched and prayed and marched. Even under threat of death, they did not stop praying, marching, and speaking out for peace.

What is it that gave them the power to act and to speak with such boldness? It was the powerful Holy Spirit, who also fills us with courage to stand no matter the costs.

Today's video, "Pray the Devil Back to Hell," concerns the efforts of Gbowee and the women who came together in 2001 during the Sierra Leone Civil War. The documentary is titled "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" because it is said that warlord Charles Taylor, who orchestrated the massive killings during the war, could pray devils out of hell. During his term of office, Taylor was accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity as a result of his involvement in the Sierra Leone Civil War. Domestically, opposition to his regime grew, culminating in the outbreak of the Second Liberian Civil War (1999–2003). By 2003, he had lost control of much of the countryside and was formally indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. That year, he resigned as a result of growing international pressure and went into exile in Nigeria. In 2006, the newly elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf formally requested his extradition, after which he was detained by UN authorities in Sierra Leone and then at the Penitentiary Institution Haaglanden. He was found guilty in April 2012 of all eleven charges levied by the Special Court, including terror, murder, and rape. In May 2012, he was sentenced to 50 years in prison. Reading the sentencing statement, Presiding Judge Richard Lussick said: "The accused has been found responsible for aiding and abetting as well as planning some of the most heinous and brutal crimes recorded in human history."

#### **IV. Moves/Points**

**Move/Point One** – The Spirit of God is powerful.

- a. The apostles are experiencing trouble and persecution;
- b. But, they have experienced what God can do; and
- c. They remember that on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and people spoke with boldness, and they ask that this Spirit be rekindled.

**Move/Point Two** – The world is full of trouble.

- a. Our neighborhoods are rife with violence and hopelessness;
- b. In times of trouble, the people of God must stand up and be counted; and
- c. We need God’s power to act and speak with boldness.

**Move/Point Three** – We can pray for the powerful Holy Spirit to empower us.

- a. We need to trust in the power of God;
- b. We gain power when the people of God unite for a cause; and
- c. The Holy Spirit will come as we do the work of God.

## **V. Celebration**

The Holy Spirit comes that we might have a word to speak and life to give to a broken world. The Holy Spirit comes that we might boldly proclaim the goodness of God in the hardest of times. The Holy Spirit comes so that we might have a word to speak in the midst of deficits, disasters, and even death. The Holy Spirit comes so that we might speak of the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us, the Word that spoke out by dying on a cross for our sake and the sake of the world, the Word that rose, ascended, and sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes so that a new generation of believers may once again turn the world upside down. And we pray, Come Holy Spirit Come!

## **VI. Illustration(s)**

### **The Elusive Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is sort of like Ringo Starr of the Beatles, the Spirit is so active and vital that people either forget it’s there or unhealthily fixate on it. The Holy Spirit is the active presence of God in Creation. It is the drumbeat that lays down the rhythm that provides the drive for the music, the dance and the lyrics. Since it’s also called the Holy Ghost, the Spirit often gets sidelined as being too strange or elusive, . . . Therefore, the Spirit often is forgotten by Christians. But really, the Spirit is simply the active presence of God here and now and for all eternity.

—Rolf Jacobson, Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms

## **The Man Who Lit a Match in Church**

An evangelist conducted a revival in a church in a small town. After he preached a powerful message, he called for those who wanted prayer to come down. Several came, received prayer, and shared their testimonies. One young man came forth and stood before the evangelist speechless. The evangelist asked, “Are you ready to give your testimony about God’s power in your life?” The young man didn’t respond. The evangelist said, “Son, can you hear me?” The young man said nothing, but he took a match and struck it, and put it close to his chest. Just then a deacon said, “Rev., this man is deaf and dumb, but he is trying to tell us with the match that his heart is on fire.”

—George Champion. 100 Illustrations for Preaching and Speaking. Orlando, FL: Self-published, 2001. p. 37

For additional illustrations, see the Sermon Illustrations section of The African American Lectionary.

## **VII. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in These Passages**

### **Acts 2:1-21**

- Sounds:** The loud violent sound of wind moving through the area; the sound of voices in different tongues and the gasp of the crowd as they hear each in their own language; the silence and then sound of Peter’s voice in proclamation;
- Sights:** A festive atmosphere with many people of different ethnicities and cultures gathered; sensory overload at the sight of flames of fire; and
- Colors:** All the skin colors of the people; the varied colors of their clothing and wares; the bright red and orange representing fire.

### **Acts 4:27-31**

- Sounds:** The apostles praying in unison; the stereophonic sound of many voices making petition to God;
- Sights:** A room filled with those who follow Jesus—some are on their knees; some have their hands in the air; all are in a posture of prayer; and
- Colors:** A contrast of colors: the stark, stone walls with the colorful clothing of those gathered.

## **VIII. Songs to Accompany This Sermon**

### **A. Well-known Song(s)**

- Send the Pentecost. By Bubby Fann
- Holy Spirit. By Albert Ayler
- Pour Out Your Holy Spirit. By Fred Hammond, Kim Rutherford, and Tommie Walker

#### **B. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2012)**

- I Need Thee Every Hour. By Robert Lowry, Rhea Miller, and George Beverly Shea
- Lord Send Your Spirit Down. By David Lockett
- Power of the Holy Ghost. By Doug Williams

#### **C. Spiritual(s)**

- Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart. By George Croly. Tune by Frederick C. Atkinson
- Come Be Baptized. By G. Alan Smith
- Spirit of the Living God. By Daniel Iverson
- Oh, the Glory of His Presence. By Steve Fry

#### **D. Liturgical Dance and Mime Ministry Music**

- Holy Ghost. Traditional
- Right Now. By Andraé Crouch

#### **E. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer**

- Fall Fresh on Me. By George Callahan
- Holy Ghost. By Bez, Clovis Taylor, Paul Ryder, Gary Whelan, Mark Day, and Paul Davis.

#### **F. Sermonic Selection(s)**

- Have You Received the Holy Ghost. By Milton Biggham
- Holy Spirit. By Carl Preacher

## G. Benediction Song(s)

- Lord Let Your Spirit Fall on Me. By Michael E. Mathis
- God Held Me Together. By Cheryl Fortune, James Fortune, and Lucius B. Hoskins

## IX. Videos, Audio, and/or Interactive Media

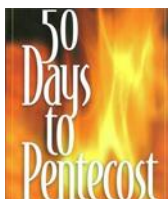
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5tr4pqWIo4>

- “Send a Pentecost,” by Rev. Biggham and The Fellowship Missionary Baptist Choir. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UOVBd52QNg> accessed 10 December 2012.
- Pentecost Revival Prayer by Bishop Herman Murray. [Sridhar, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjXMhNX2uQw> Pentecost Revival Prayer by Bishop Herman Murray
- “The Sound of Pentecost,” by Bishop LeRoy Jackson Woolard. Online location: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9uS\\_YWzX18](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9uS_YWzX18) accessed 10 December 2012.

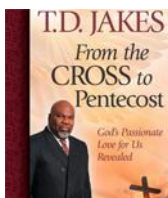
## X. Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons, Bible Studies, and/or Worship Services Related to Pentecost



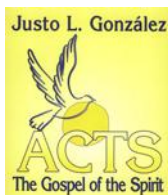
Starling-Matthews, Carolyn. The Journey to Pentecost: A Real Story of a Mother's Search for God through the Eyes of Her Daughter. Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2012.



Access. 50 Days to Pentecost: A Bible Journey with the First Christians. Paso Robles, CA: Access Publishing, 1993.

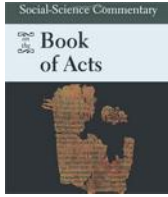


Jakes, T.D. From the Cross to Pentecost: God's Passionate Love for Us Revealed. New York, NY: Brilliance Audio, 2012.



Gonzalez, Justo L. Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.





Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. On the Book of Acts. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008.

## XI. Links to Helpful Websites for Pentecost

- “What is Pentecost and what difference does it make in our lives today?” Online location: <http://www.explorefaith.org/questions/pentecost.html> accessed 12 December 2012.
- Pentecost prayers. Online location: <http://liturgyoutside.net/PentecostSundayOutside.html> accessed 12 December 2012.
- Worship ideas for Pentecost. Online location: <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Planning/Pentecost.aspx> accessed 12 December 2012.

## XII. Notes for Select Songs

### A. Well-known Song(s)

- Send the Pentecost. By Bubby Fann  
Location:  
Judah Prayze. Indianapolis, IN: Tyscot, 2002.
- Holy Spirit. By Albert Ayler  
Location:  
Green, Al. Trust in God. San Francisco, CA: RNB Entertainment Group, 1986.
- Pour Out Your Holy Spirit. By Fred Hammond, Kim Rutherford, and Tommie Walker  
Location:  
Hammond, Fred. In Case You Missed It...And Then Some. New York, NY: Verity, 2001.

### B. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2012)

- I Need Thee Every Hour. By Robert Lowry, Rhea Miller, and George Beverly Shea  
Location:  
Headley, Heather. Audience of One. Brentwood, TN: EMI, 2009.
- Lord Send Your Spirit Down. By David Lockett  
Location:  
Walker, Hezekiah. The Essential. New York, NY: Legacy, 2007.

- Power of the Holy Ghost. By Doug Williams  
Location:  
The Mighty Clouds of Joy. Gospel Legacy. Nashville, TN: Light Records, 2008.

### **C. Spiritual(s)**

- Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart. By George Croly. Tune by Frederick C. Atkinson  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #312
- Come Be Baptized. By G. Alan Smith  
Location:  
Zion Still Sings for Every Generation. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007. #188
- Spirit of the Living God. By Daniel Iverson  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #320
- Oh, the Glory of His Presence. By Steve Fry  
Location:  
Zion Still Sings. #85

### **D. Liturgical Dance and Mime Ministry Music**

- Holy Ghost. Traditional  
Location:  
Ellison, Tommy and The Singing Stars. Live And More. Atlanta, GA: AIR Gospel, 1999.
- Right Now. By Andraé Crouch  
Location:  
Lawrence, Donald. I Speak Life. New York, NY: Verity, 2004.

### **E. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer**

- Fall Fresh on Me. By George Callahan  
Location:  
Hawkins, Edward and Walter Hawkins. Testify. Nashville, TN: Central South, 2008.
- Holy Ghost. By Bez, Clovis Taylor, Paul Ryder, Gary Whelan, Mark Day, and Paul Davis  
Location:  
Brunson, Milton. 50 Blessed Years. New York, NY: Sony, 1998.

## **F. Sermonic Selection(s)**

- Have You Received the Holy Ghost. By Milton Biggham  
Location:  
Lilly, Lillian. Gotta Have Faith. Jackson, MS: Malaco, 1997.
- Holy Spirit. By Carl Preacher  
Location:  
Adams, Yolanda. Queens of Gospel. Los Angeles, CA: Fuel 2000, 2003.

## **G. Benediction Song(s)**

- Lord Let Your Spirit Fall on Me. By Michael E. Mathis  
Location:  
Caesar, Shirley. Sailin'. New York, NY: Word, 1984.
- God Held Me Together. By Cheryl Fortune, James Fortune, and Lucius B. Hoskins  
Location:  
Cortez, Zacardi. The Introduction. Houston, TX: Black Smoke Music, 2012.