

**Pentecost Sunday (May 28/23) Leader's Guide**  
**"Signs of the Spirit" Acts 2:1-14a, 37-38, 41-47**

Our reflection began with an overview of the three pilgrimage feasts of the Jewish faith – Tabernacles, Passover, and Pentecost. We looked at how Jesus fulfilled the feast of Tabernacles and Passover.

1. As we looked at how Jesus fulfilled the feasts of Tabernacles and Passover – what truths stuck out to you about who Jesus is and what he has done for us? How does that impact how you then live?

*The following is an unedited portion of the sermon that reflects on how Jesus fulfills the first two of three pilgrimage feasts.*

*The feast of tabernacles remembered the Jewish people's time in the wilderness – a nomadic people living in tents – commanded to build a tabernacle – a place of worship at the very center of their encampment – a place where the presence of the living God dwelt – the Shekinah glory of God descending as a pillar of cloud by day – a pillar fire by night - God communicating to his people – I am with you – when you are wandering the desert living in a tent I am living in a tent – when your tent is mildewy and threadbare – my tent is mildewy and threadbare – I am not distant – remote – aloof – I am with you in whatever you're facing – and if one were to work out the dating of Jesus' birth it would land right in the midst of the feast of tabernacles – in Jesus God comes as Immanuel – God with us – as the gospel of John puts it – the word became flesh and tabernacled with us - Jesus fulfills the feast of tabernacles.*

*Passover commemorated another key moment in Jewish history – under the oppression of Egyptian slave masters – God raises up a leader - Moses who comes to an Egyptian Pharaoh – our God says - let my people go – that we may worship and be formed as his people – even successive plagues could not incline Pharaoh's heart – a final plague – the angel of death coming upon the land – through trust in lamb's blood placed on the door posts of their homes – death passed over the Israelites – Pharaoh relented - the Jewish people freed to worship and be formed as a people – at Passover Jesus dies – through faith in Him – trust in his shed blood placed on the door posts of our heart – judgement and death pass over us – by his resurrection we are freed from slavery to sin and death to worship and be formed as a new people - Jesus fulfills Passover.*

*The question asks how this impacts how we live. As this is a personal reflection and you as a leader are able to set the tone of engagement having an answer prepared can set the trajectory of conversation.*

When the day of Pentecost arrived – or literally when the day of Pentecost was fulfilled. This story will reveal how Jesus fulfills the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost had two different emphases, one historical and the other agricultural. Historically it came 'pente' or 50 days after

Passover, when the Israelites came to the base of Mount Sinai, and remembers Moses receiving the law intended to form a people to reflect the character of God.

**Read Acts 2:1-14a, 37-38, 41-47 and Exodus 19:1-6; 16-19; 32:1-8; 19-20; 27-29**

2. What are the commonalities between these two stories? What does this tell us about how Jesus fulfills Pentecost?

*The coming of the presence of God attended with signs (fire, wind, earthquake, sound). Where in the scriptures this presence of God comes upon a tabernacle, a bush, a mountain, here it comes upon a people. This means that God is not only with us, he is by the Spirit within us. This means that the meeting place between God and humanity is a community inhabited by the Spirit.*

*The law comes and 3000 lie dead, the Spirit comes and three thousand are brought to new life in Christ.*

*There is judgement that comes in each. The people are cut to the heart.*

*Jesus brings about the fullness of what Pentecost pointed to. A people who would be formed to reflect the character of God. A new life based on beholding the character and work of Jesus brings about a transformation that is radically different from a life rooted in beholding stone tablets.*

3. Pentecost is first a call to holiness, to repentance, to reflect the character of God. What is it that Jesus can do for us in this regard that stone tablets cannot do?

*The following is an unedited portion of the sermon that reflects on this question:*

*Pentecost is a call to holiness – a call to reflect the character of God – a call to repentance – but not by looking at stone tablets – but by looking at Jesus – who beckons us – I died to rescue you from that thing – to free you from its hold – it's harm upon you – others – let me free you – heal you – don't cover it over with justifications – let my goodness mercy and love cover you –*

*A repentance borne of stone tablets says – I have provoked a sovereign God who can tear up rocks and trees – but a repentance borne of beholding Jesus says – I have spurned a loving goodness – one who loves me with an everlasting love and longs to set me free.*

*A life borne of beholding stone tablets can only be made aware of its sin – but a life borne of beholding Jesus can be made new by the power and work of His Spirit.*

The second emphases of the feast of Pentecost is that it was the feast of first fruits. It was the time they began to bring in the grain harvest. It was the first taste of an actual future. The Spirit comes upon us that we would be a foretaste of Jesus' future.

4. In what ways is this new community formed as a foretaste of Jesus' future?
  - A. *They gather a community of incredible diversity – a foretaste of every tongue and tribe and nation gathered around the throne of the living God in worship.*
  - B. *They were devoted to the apostles teaching, committed to King Jesus and the patterns of the Kingdom, the patterns of love, justice, and forgiveness.*
  - C. *They were selling everything they had and giving it to whomever had need, being a foretaste of a future where the poor are lifted up, and all wrongs have been righted.*
  - D. *They were committed to joyfilled worship – a foretaste of a future where we will behold God face to face.*

The Spirit enabled all who gathered to speak of the great works of God in all the languages of the earth – men, women, and children. The teaching of the scriptures is that everyone who is in Christ is given a gift by the Spirit for the common good. We need all the gifts expressed in our midst so that we might together be formed as a foretaste of Jesus' future.

#### **Read 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13, Romans 12:3-8**

5. How can we more and more be a community where all of the gifts are given space and expression?

*This is a personal reflection question where I would love to see some particular attention brought to the reality that there are some gifts we aren't all that comfortable seeing expressed. This is particularly true of the gifts listed in the 1 Corinthians passage. It would be helpful to explore why?*

6. Where do you see the signs of the Spirit's work in our midst?

*Tim mentioned a few in the sermon*

- i. Increasing diversity*
- ii. Greater freedom and joy in worship*
- iii. The multitude of gifts being expressed*
- iv. Our deepening commitment to justice*
- v. Our generosity toward need in our midst*
- vi. Our growth as a community*

*...there are likely many more.*

7. How can we more and more rely upon the work and power of the Spirit to enable us to reflect the character of God and live as a foretaste of Jesus' future?

*We can have a tendency as a western church to rely upon our own gifts and competencies to live into our call as a church rather than relying upon the direction and power of the Spirit. In order to move toward a deepening trust it will require a bit of a culture shift – how might that come about?*