

May 19: Pentecost: The Renewal of Vows (Leader's Guide)

Readings: Ex 19:1-8, 18; Jer 31:31-33; Acts 2:1-8, 12-21, 41

1. According to Karen's sermon, what was the Day of Pentecost for the Jews?

Pentecost, or "fifty days", was the Greek name for the Jewish feast day "Shavuot" or the "Feast of Weeks". It was originally a grain harvest (see Lev 23), but for centuries the Jewish people have celebrated it as the anniversary of God giving the law on Mount Sinai.

2. Read the Exodus passage. In what ways does it remind you of what happened to the disciples on the day of Pentecost?

There are a number of parallels: Both occur 50 days after God freeing his people. There is wind and fire in both scenes. In both there is a fledgling community, still uncertain of their identity and purpose, who are met by God and given renewed vision and power for the direction they are to go.

3. Read the passage from Jeremiah. What is the significance of this passage in light of both the Exodus passage and the events of Acts 2?

God tells the people through the prophets that they have broken his covenant that he gave on Mount Sinai where he became their husband, and essentially "committed adultery" with other gods. But he promises that a time of restoration of the relationship will come, and a new covenant, one that won't be written in stone but on hearts. The apostles later understood this passage to be referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

4. Why was this new covenant different than the old covenant?

Unlike the previous covenant, God would be the one fulfilling both sides of this covenant, and thus it would remain unbroken in essence, regardless of what the people did. This one would depend on the indwelling Spirit to fulfill it.

5. What are the three things Karen's sermon said that we could live into because of the coming of the Holy Spirit?

A covenant of love, that is for everyone, everywhere, regardless of status or identity; a community of love, that is growing together and learning to reconcile and forgive through the power of the Holy Spirit; and a calling of love, in which the Holy Spirit gives us dreams and visions of a world made new, and gives us the ability to enact those dreams and visions.

6. What does Pentecost mean to you?