

“Is Every Sunday a Little Pentecost?”

“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, that He may be with you forever: the Spirit of truth....” (John 14:16-17a, Modern English Version)

It has been said that every Sunday is a little Easter. And in many ways, this is true. For Christians gather together on the first day of the week to worship the crucified Lord and Savior who bodily rose again from the dead on the first day of the week. And in coming to worship Jesus, we remember and acknowledge that He who died now lives because He rose again. The blessings of the One who rose that first Easter Sunday, blessings which include forgiveness, salvation, and new & unending life, are freely offered each Sunday by Him.

So, it would be correct to say that every Sunday is a little Easter. But how about Pentecost? Is every Sunday a little Pentecost? Well, “no” and “yes.” The day of Pentecost in Acts 2 occurred fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead. And it was on the first day of the week, just as our annual celebration of Pentecost is always on a Sunday - always fifty days after Easter. And there are differences as well as similarities between the first Pentecost and our public worship today. Let’s look at the differences first.

To begin, the Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 2 were there to observe the Old Testament celebration of the Feast of Weeks, which was sometimes referred to as “Pentecost.” But why would Luke have referred to this Old Testament celebration as *“the day of Pentecost”* (Acts 2:1, ESV)? Well, as the Lord told Moses about the Feast of Weeks: *“You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord”* (Leviticus 23:15-16, ESV). Now as you recall from the Holy Gospels, Jesus died on the Passover and the following day (the Sabbath) He rested in the tomb from His work of redemption. He then rose the very next day. So, according to the Jewish calendar in the year that Jesus died, fifty days after Jesus arose would have been *“seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath”* (Leviticus 23:15, ESV) - *“the day of Pentecost”* (Acts 2:1, ESV).

See, you and I, as 21st century Christians, don’t come to church fifty days after Easter to celebrate the Old Testament Feast of Weeks. We arrive at worship already knowing that, as prophesied in the Old Testament, *“Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed”* (1 Corinthians 5:7b, ESV) for the sins of the whole world and has risen again. And most Christians today probably don’t gather for worship on Pentecost Sunday (or any other Sunday for that matter) and find gathered in the pews *“devout men from every nation under heaven”* (Acts 2:5, ESV). For see, fifty days after Jesus walked out of His tomb, Jewish worshippers from far away places were in Jerusalem to make sacrifices at the temple for the Feast of Weeks. And Leviticus 23 tells us what they were to be offering. *“Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord. You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the Lord. And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They*

shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations” (Leviticus 23:16b-21, ESV).

See, our setting for worship in the 21st century is different than it was for Old Testament Christians. And understandably so. For we live on the other side of the cross and the empty tomb. And the events that occurred on that very first Pentecost Day were also much different than what happens when we worship each Sunday. For the Holy Spirit manifested Himself in a very powerful and pronounced way 2000 years ago on that first Pentecost Day. For on that first Pentecost, *“suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where [the disciples] were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4, ESV).* And though *“all these who [were] speaking [were] Galileans” (Acts 2:7, ESV),* yet the *“men from every nation under heaven... were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:5-6, ESV).*

My friends, the setting for that first Day of Pentecost and the miraculous works done on that day, which is sometimes called the “birthday” of the church, differ from our setting and experiences each Sunday. For in the first century church, *“the signs of an apostle—signs and wonders and miracles—were performed among [them] with all perseverance” (2 Corinthians 12:12, Evangelical Heritage Version).* This being said, there still are very important things, though, that are the same today. For even though we obviously no longer live in the apostolic age and the Spirit doesn’t manifest Himself today as He did fifty days after our Lord’s resurrection, yet the Holy Spirit is present in our midst.

See, though the outward supernatural gifts aren’t being expressed in the modern church, it doesn’t mean that the Holy Spirit isn’t at work in today’s church. After all, our Lord and Savior said: *“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, that He may be with you forever: the Spirit of truth....”* And Jesus’ request has been answered. For the *“Counselor,”* literally the *“Parakleton” (Paraclete),* has been sent. And Jesus prayed that this One, who is the Holy Spirit, will *“be with [us] forever.”*

See, the Holy Spirit is still with His Church today. For dear Christian, the Holy Spirit *“dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:17, ESV).* And the Holy Spirit is present among us today in His Gospel in the Word & Sacraments (which are His Means of Grace). And He comes to us human beings, even lives inside us, when He makes us His own through His Means of Grace (Acts 2:38; 10:44-47).

So, is every Sunday a little Pentecost? Well, as I said above, in some ways no. Yet, the same Spirit proclaiming God’s Word and washing sinners clean through the waters of Baptism that first Pentecost Day is the same Spirit, the Third Person of God, who is present in public worship every Sunday in His Means of Grace bringing absolution, deliverance, and unending life. So yes, in a very real sense, what happened that first Pentecost resembles what happens each Sunday during Christian worship. For the Holy Spirit who showed forth in power, and also revealed the identity of the Messiah that first Pentecost, is still present and at work in the church today. Thanks be to

God that *“the Father”* has answered the *“[prayer]”* of His Son and has *“[given]”* us the *“Counselor,” “the Spirit of truth,” “that He may be with [us] forever.”*

See you Sunday at church to receive the Spirit’s saving gifts,
Pastor