

24 May 2026
The Feast of Pentecost

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“From Jesus’ Heart to Yours”

Text: John 7:37-39; Acts 2:1-21; Introit

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

What the prophet Joel proclaimed and Jesus promised has now been fulfilled. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is poured out in fullness upon the Church.

We heard Joel’s prophecy today from Peter’s preaching in the reading from Acts, that ***in the last days, God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh.***

And the past few weeks we have heard Jesus’ promises. When He had promised His disciples *a Helper, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who He would send them from the Father* (John 14:26; 15:26). And when right before He ascended, as we heard just last week, He told them they would be *clothed with power from on high*. And then He instructed them to *stay in the city until that happened* (Luke 24:49).

And today we heard when it did. The Day of Pentecost. Jews from all over the world had gathered to celebrate the Feast. A Pentecost feast, it turns out, unlike any other. For just as Jesus had transformed the great Feast of the Passover, filling it with new meaning, with Himself as the new Passover Lamb, and with a new deliverance - not from the slavery of Egypt but our slavery to sin - so now He transforms the great Feast of Pentecost, from the beginning of the wheat harvest to the beginning of the harvest of souls, with the work of the Holy Spirit.

And so led by the Holy Spirit, and empowered with the Holy Spirit, the disciples would now go out to all the world to proclaim Jesus as Saviour and Lord. To proclaim the promise, that ***everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*** A *calling upon* made possible by that same Holy Spirit working faith in hearts through the Word. Working faith in Jesus crucified, risen, ascended, victorious, and reigning as the one true God.

That is to say, Jesus ***glorified***. For our faith is not just in a mighty God, a sovereign God, a transcendent God, but *in a dying God*. A God whose ***glory*** is not just to be mighty, sovereign, and transcendent, but whose glory is to lay down His life to save the world. That’s why many couldn’t figure Jesus out. They expected big and

powerful Messiah, not Jesus. They expected their Messiah to smite their enemies, not be smote, crucified, by them! So Jesus . . . *He can't be.*

So the people were thirsty. Thirsty for life, thirsty for God, thirsty for hope. The same ol' same, ol' was, well . . . the same ol', same ol'! Day after day, year after year, nothing was changing. And if it was, it wasn't for the better. The glory days of Israel . . . they wanted them back! The days of Kings David and Solomon, the days of peace and prosperity, they were a long time ago. Hard to imagine them ever coming back.

And it's really the same today. Today, too, people are thirsty for life, thirsty for God, thirsty for hope. We're chasing after life and hope but instead of finding them, we just get more thirsty. And tired. Nothing seems to change. Or if it does, not for the better. The internet came with such promise . . . until it got filled with pornography, and scammers and phishing schemes and trolls and misinformation and influencers and algorithms to addict us to it. AI, too. What's real? What's not? How do you know? Who's informing it? How is it taking over? So maybe you, too, long for the good ol' days - ***thirst*** for the good ol' days! - when things were simpler, safer, saner. And for the glory days of the Church - a church filled with people, and when the Church had influence in our society. Days that are probably not coming back.

Thirsty. That's a pretty good description of our world, isn't it? In so many ways you can picture the devil offering us a drink, then pulling it back. Here's a drink! Or, there's a drink! But never actually giving it to us. Or if he does, giving an empty cup. And then filled with evil glee at the confusion and pain and captivity and emptiness he lures us into.

But Jesus promises a drink. As we heard today, Jesus says ***If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.*** I will give you what the world cannot. I will give you what the devil will not.

*And is Jesus able to do that? Well, as the Scripture has said, ***Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**** Rivers of water that give life - the life and hope we are thirsty for.

*And what is this water? ***This he said about the Spirit.**** For the Spirit gives what no one else can - what we need, what we are thirsty for: the gifts of God won for us by Jesus on the cross.

And so the cross had to come first. ***For as yet the Spirit had not been given, [like this] because Jesus was not yet glorified.***

Now, the Spirit had been active and working before. He is mentioned often in the

Old Testament - from creation to the prophets to overshadowing Mary when Jesus was conceived in her virgin womb. **But He had not before been poured out like this.** This was new. This was different. *Because* Jesus had now been glorified in being hung up on the cross. For there, on the cross, *in a way like no other*, we see the love of God and the glory of God, in all that He would use His might and sovereignty to do for us. And so from there also the Spirit is poured out for us *in a way like no other*.

For when Jesus was crucified, we are told that when *one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, at once there came out blood and water* (John 19:34). Now surely there are physical, medical reasons for that, but this is not merely a physical report being given to us - there is also the *spiritual* meaning for that. That out of Jesus' side, out of Jesus' **heart** - His heart filled with great love for us in laying down His life for us - out of that heart pours the blood of the altar and the water of the font. The very places our hunger and thirst are satisfied. No bait and switch here! No offering and pulling back. Just gifts. The gifts we need. The gifts we can find nowhere else. *The gifts that from the Spirit flow* (LSB #498 v. 7). The Spirit poured out from and by Christ crucified.

So what are you thirsting for? Forgiveness, meaning, value, purpose, life, hope, love, peace? The world cannot give these things. Or if it does, only in the smallest measure. And usually only for the shortest time. Until it decides not to. Until its standards change, or its opinions change, or your usefulness to them ends. And they pull back the cup . . . *and you are left thirsty*.

But not so with Jesus. From Him comes that **river of living water** that never runs out. The Spirit poured out to fill us with the forgiveness, life, hope, love and peace of God, and to give our lives meaning and purpose and value. Because if Jesus would lay down His life for you, it was to raise you up as He was raised up, to a new and eternal life. A life you have already begun to live in Him.

Because you have received His Spirit. The pouring out of the Spirit that *began* on that Pentecost *continues* still today. The **sound of the mighty rushing wind** replaced by the voice of those who speak the Word, and the mark of **the tongues as of fire** replaced by the mark of the cross applied in the water of Baptism. But though the signs change, it is the same Spirit, bringing Jesus and His gifts to you, and you to Jesus. That all you need, all you are thirsting for, you have.

So if you find yourself still thirsty, still empty, still searching, hounded by sin, tormented with doubts and fears, striving for acceptance, chasing after meaning, what are you trying to satisfy your thirsting and hungering and searching with? Is it with what the world is offering? Where the thoughts and opinions of men are telling

you it is? Is it constantly changing? Does the bar keep moving? Are you striving harder and harder but only getting more thirsty, more hungry, and less hopeful, and less peace?

If so, and I think that happens to all of us from time to time - or maybe a lot of the time! - *maybe it's time for a change; time to be transformed*. From the old, to the new. That with Jesus' *new* Passover and *new* Pentecost, there is a *new* you. *In* the world but not *of* the world or filled with the world. *In* the world but *filled* with Jesus and His Spirit and His gifts, that you hunger and thirst no more. But when you do, come back and drink deeply of His Word and forgiveness, and eat and drink Jesus' Body and Blood. And be filled with His life - which has no end.

When Jesus spoke those words we heard from Him today, John told us it was ***the last day of the feast, the great day***. But when Jesus returns for us on the Last Day, the great day, it will not be the last day of *our* feast, but just the beginning of the Feast! The Feast of heaven. The marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom was has no end. Where, as the book of Revelation tells us (7:16-17), in words very similar to those we heard today . . .

*They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; . . .
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to **springs of living water**,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*

No more hunger. No more thirst. Just Jesus. Just life. Life without end. That's what the Day of Pentecost is all about. Not weird signs and wonders! But this new life. Begun now. And with no end.

So on this day, we who are thirsty pray: ***Come, Holy Spirit!*** Come from the heart of Jesus and ***fill the hearts of the faithful***. Fill us! That from our hearts, too, flow ***rivers of living water***. That filled with You and Your life, that from our hearts and lives, all we think and speak and do, be filled with the Spirit of God. New lives filled with faith and hope and love.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.