

**Gifts of the Life**  
**May 11, 2008**  
Acts 2:1-4, 33  
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Synopsis:

Let us celebrate mother's love, patience, generosity, sacrifice, commitment, and yes, for the strong willed, even discipline. Mothers should be honored and celebrated.

**MOTHER'S DAY AND PENTECOST**  
Acts 2:1-4, 33

Pastor Jeff has been preaching a series on the amazing life of Joseph. Last week, Mark Chapman preached on Joseph's rise into power because of his faithfulness to God no matter what circumstances he found himself. But today, we are going to put Joseph on hold for 3 reasons. 1. it is Mother's Day, 2. it is Pentecost, and 3, I'm the one preaching!

What happens when an extra-early Easter and a fixed-date national holiday collide? Well, you might end up with Mother's Day on Pentecost, or Pentecost on Mother's Day, depending upon your perspective. Mother's Day is the

third largest celebrated holiday, coming after Christmas and Easter. And Pentecost, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, is one of five components of the Christian gospel. The other components are the Incarnation, (Jesus coming to this earth), the Atonement (another word is the crucifixion), the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost. It is Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit that allows our faith to be living and life changing. (This could be a pretty heavy, intellectual theological sermon, but don't go to sleep yet.)

As I have thought about this and looking for a common theme, in both events we can **celebrate the gift of life.**

Let us pray.

Mother's Day

I always thought that Mother's Day was a result of Hallmark promotion. But I found out that it was inspired by a British holiday, Mothering Sunday, and brought to the United States by Julia Ward Howe after the American Civil War in 1870. [At little interesting side note- Julia Ward Howe also wrote the words to the Battle Hymn of the Republic.](#)

Her Mother's Day Proclamation was a call for Peace. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson declared the first national Mother's Day as a day for American citizens to show the flag in honor of those mothers whose sons had died in war. But today we have expanded it to be one of the most commercially successful U.S. holidays.

Let us celebrate mother's love, patience, generosity, sacrifice, commitment, and yes, for the strong willed, even discipline. Mothers should be honored and celebrated. I am a mother, and of course it is fun to be honored and celebrated.

But, as holidays goes, it is also one of the most painful days of the year. I talked to some people from this congregation who are not showing up to church today simply because of the pain it causes. The cards that we buy for mothers make heroes and saints out of them. **But how many of us sitting here have or had that perfect mother?** Mother's Day brings out all the wounds caused by mothers. Abandonment, anger, abuse, lost. Both

Pastor Emily and I lost our mothers this year. I can remember every detail of last year's Mother's Day, we knew it would be the last one with my mother, as she died two weeks later. So today is a reminder of our loss. Some people don't have children because of infertility, so becoming a mother will never happen which makes this day so difficult. Some mothers have lost a child, so mother's day is a different kind of sorrow. Whatever the reason, this celebration also brings out all the brokenness in our lives.

I ask you one question with this in mind. **No matter what your emotions are this day, what would this world be like if there were no mothers?** There would be no life. So, no matter what is going on emotionally for you today, good or bad, joy or sorrow, we can all celebrate the **gift of life that our mothers gave us.** we simply would not be here if our mother did not birth us- for that we can celebrate.

**Now let us look at our Scripture text for today.** It is about the Holy Spirit and how he descended upon the believers. Note that **v. 1** says that the day of Pentecost had come. This means this was not the first Pentecost. From the Old Testament, Pentecost was also known as the Festival of Harvest, celebrating the first fruits of the harvest, marked by a sacrifice to God. **Leviticus 23:16**, tells us “to count off 50 days after Passover and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord.”

In **Acts 2**, the believers had gathered together after Jesus had ascended to his Father. There were not just the 12 disciples, but about 120 believers. They were together studying Scripture and probably telling each other how they had encountered Jesus. They were 120 isolated individuals who were lost because their leader Jesus Christ had left them. For three years Jesus had been everything to them- beloved companion, staunch friend, never-failing guide, and exciting teacher. They had heard from Jesus that he was going away so that the Comforter, the Giver of Life could come, but they did not understand. The disciples were alone and abandoned, not knowing

what to do next. **V. 2-4** “When, suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

**What do the symbols of wind, fire, and tongues mean to the body of Christ, to the church, to us today?**

Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind- From the Greek, the word wind means **Breath of Life**. Paul writes in his letter to the church in Corinth, that no one can say that 'Jesus is Lord' except by the power of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). Going back to our scripture today, the term “rush of a mighty wind” also implies **power**. The Holy Spirit, breathes life sustaining power into the church and each of her members. Life sustaining power that changes things. What the coming of the Holy Spirit did on the first Pentecost after Jesus’ death,

resurrection and ascension is to bring **order, relief and life in the midst of chaos, 'suffering', and death.**

The **second symbol** that is mentioned with the coming of the Holy Spirit is **fire**- divided tongues as of fire appeared among them. Fire is used in two ways here- it burns up garbage and waste and thus purifies. And it also is a symbol for enthusiasm, passion, purpose, a hunger within.

**Does that sound like a godly mother?** As the Holy Spirit breaths on us new life in Christ, he also purifies us with the conviction of sins and gives us the passion and hunger for God, a passionate hunger that only God can fill. Now, in this one brief sermon, I cannot even come close in describing the Holy Spirit and his work. There are about 500 references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament alone. But, I pray that you will have the passionate hunger to study God's Word and learn more about His Spirit who is always pointing to Jesus Christ.

There is a **third symbol**- that of the **use of tongues**. The languages spoken here were not gibberish, but were known languages, spoken by people all over the known world. People understood what was being said. They were edifying proclamations. They instructed, they were intelligent utterances on the part of the disciples. They were praising God with these languages and they were telling of His mighty works.

**Let us put this all together**- the Holy Spirit is the breathe of life, life that gives us the passionate hunger that only God can fill. It also gives us the understanding and words to be Jesus' "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Because of the work of the Holy Spirit in this world, and in the hearts of believers through the ages, we are here in this church building today celebrating Pentecost. This is why some theologians describe Pentecost as the birthday of the church, the birthday of the body of Christ, the body of believers. So, we can think of this day as a celebration- a **2000 plus year Birthday of the church**, of the

empowered body of Christ. This is why there are red balloons outside in our courtyard today. As your mother gave you life and you grew into adulthood, so the Holy Spirit gives you spiritual life and the power to grow in your faith. This is what we experienced last week with the confirmation of the eighth graders. They were confirming their new life in Jesus Christ through the power and breathe of the Holy Spirit.

This New Testament Pentecost brought a new era. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God came upon only a few chosen individuals, influencing them from above, working from the outside inward. In the new era, Jesus' glorified presence and His own resurrection life is not only with us, but also in us, to transform us, giving us new life, working from the inside out.

#### Gift of Life

So as we go out today, let us be thankful for our mothers and the life they gave us. Let us praise God of the godly women in our world that brought us to a saving faith in our Lord and Savior, the women who have given us a passionate hunger to know God and serve him.

Let us go out celebrating God for sending his Spirit to be with us, to be in us, so that we can live and grow daily into his image and into a deeper relationship with our Lord and Savior. Go out, knowing that because of the Holy Spirit living within us, Jesus is our beloved companion, staunch friend, never-failing guide, and amazing teacher. Because of the Holy Spirit, no matter what is going on in our life, God is always with us, he will never leave us nor forsake. Go out and celebrate!

## **PRAY**

### **Benediction**

To celebrate life, for the first 100 women, there is a book, by one of my favorite Bible Study Leader's Cynthia Heald, Titled, *Becoming a Woman of Purpose*. It is free for the first 100 women at the Welcome Center.