



Thoughts From the Pastor's Desk

Let me ask "Have you ever sang Happy Birthday?" Now I know that is a rhetorical question but allow me to answer it anyway. "Of course I have, I sing it many times every year."

But the rhetorical question asks another, "Why do you and I sing it?" and here the answers basically fall along two lines of thought. First, we sing it in celebration of someone as they have gotten another year older. But there is another reason that we sing "Happy Birthday" and that is when we sing it we are celebrating life itself, for we do not sing happy birthday to something that is without life.

By now you might be wondering where am I going with this article for *The Beacon*. Well did you know that Pentecost is the birthday of the church? And did you know that Pentecost this year falls on Sunday, May 31st? And as such it is a day of celebration in the life of the church.

Let me tell you a little about Pentecost and then where I am going with this article.

The birthday of the church, the description of the first Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Jesus is found in Acts 2:1-14. In this portion of scripture, the apostles and others have convened in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover. Luke, the author of Acts, reports that there was a sudden sound 'like the rush of a mighty wind' from heaven, followed by 'tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.' As a result, the apostles began to speak in tongues; that is in languages that were understood by Jews and proselytes from other nations that were there for the Jewish celebration.

Peter then interprets this event as the coming of the Holy Spirit, a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (2:8-32). Peter, in proclaiming that the last days had arrived and that Jesus had been raised from the dead, calls for the repentance and baptism of his listeners. As a result, about three thousand persons were added to the group of believers that day.

Paul Achtemeier writes that "Within the literary context of Acts, the events associated with Pentecost constitute the fulfillment not only of the prophecy of Joel but also of the promise of Jesus." Acts 1:8 tells us that Jesus said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you

shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." Achtemeier goes on to write "Thus, the events of Pentecost are presented in Acts as the fulfillment of this promise: on that day, the Holy Spirit did indeed come upon the apostles and empowered them to witness to Jesus the Christ."

This is important because it is not only celebration but it is life. It is the life of the church reminding us that the church is a living breathing organism and as such we celebrate worship every Sunday, even during the summer.

So as summer approaches and you may have a break from a church committee or you may go on a vacation, remember that the church is alive and vibrant celebrating worship every Sunday. Hope to see you there.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Rich