

# Pentecost: Real Power

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning. I ask that you bear with me this morning because this is one of the hardest verses for me to read. Our first scripture is from Acts 2 verses 1 through 21.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were, staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken.

Utterly amazed, they asked, aren't all of these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?

[ 1 : 1 0 ] Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues.

Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean? Some, however, made fun of them and said, Ah, they have too much wine.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you. Listen carefully to what I say.

These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning. No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophecy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, excuse me, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days, and they will prophecy.

[ 2 : 4 6 ] I will show wonders in the heavens above, and signs on the earth below, blood and fire, and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Our next reading is from John 14, verses 15 through 17.

If you love me, keep my commands, and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate, to help you and be with you forever, the spirit of truth.

The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. So would you pray with me, please? Almighty God, thank you for the gift it is to have this moment and this time as you move so powerfully among us.

[ 3 : 48 ] We are grateful for the joy we've already experienced today in the presence of your spirit that is moving mightily among us and in our church family. And now, Lord, at this time, touch each heart in a fresh way.

Fall fresh on us as we have sung and prayed already today. Let the light that you give shine so brightly in each of us as we go into the world that the world will be drawn to it.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So, Renee, you did great. No worries about that. So, that being said, let me ask you a question.

I'm good with questions. You all know that. What was the last mountain you conquered? Maybe you didn't hear me.

What was the last mountain you conquered? Now, some of you probably have this face because you say, well, I don't really climb mountains that often. Maybe I ought to rephrase it this way.

[ 4 : 47 ] When was the last time that something hard landed in your life and you got through it? Last goal you set for yourself that was a real stretch and you were able to achieve it.

Last challenge that landed on your path and you rose to meet it. In many ways, that is conquering some mountain on your journey.

Especially if it took something to do it. Because we all have stories of overcoming challenge.

I don't know anybody who hasn't had to overcome some degree of challenge in their life. I also don't know too many people who haven't said, here's something that I want.

Here's something that I hope for. Here's something I feel driven to try to achieve and had to work to get there. And if you were able to do that, you know what it means to conquer mountains.

[ 5 : 51 ] And the reason why I ask that is because to do that you got to dig a little deeper. This isn't stuff that's handed for you. This isn't stuff that you just cruise on into. You got to figure it out.

And you got to work hard to make it happen. And that is a pretty universal human experience. And since we are familiar with that, I would ask you, what are you dreaming now?

What is the mountain that's in front of you that you're not sure you can face? What's that dream that may be nagging in the back of your mind or that picture that may be in front of you that says, well, maybe or it would be nice, but you're not quite ready to tackle it or you don't think that maybe it's for you.

Because we're familiar with that story too. And the reason why I ask it is because I want you to hear well the story that we celebrate today. because ordinary people, people whom the world thought wouldn't ever amount to much, these are good people, nice people, from what we can tell, hardworking people, but because of something that happened to them, because of someone they met on the way, they became a force that literally changed the world.

the world was never the same after they did what they did. And so, how does that work?

[ 7 : 40 ] We usually think there's something exceptional about people who can do that. Like there must be something really just special that the rest of us don't have. But friends, what we're talking about today is that group of people gathered in a small room in the city of Jerusalem, people who had followed and loved and learned from Jesus Christ, whom Jesus said, wait, wait here, and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

And that's exactly what happened. And they literally went and changed and changed the world. And here's the thing for us.

Because we sit and we think of the big tests in front of us. We think of the things we hope for, the things that we dream, the stuff that we hope to accomplish someday.

We also look back at our past and we go, well, I've conquered that mountain. I've done this. I've come this far. And we got both of these things swirling around in our minds and yet, still there feels like there may be this thing that's missing.

There's this disconnect, this discontent, and that's where I want us to sit today. Because if you find yourself wondering about purpose, if you find yourself wondering about goals, or if you're finding yourself just tired and out of gas and not sure what's next for me, then you need to remember this story.

[ 9 : 15 ] Because that story that we celebrate today has the answer to your question. So, what is the story?

You already heard Renee read it. We've got a group of people, the disciples, the people who were closest to Jesus. They'd learned from him.

They'd walked with him. They'd seen him do extraordinary things. And Jesus returned to the Father. But he gave them that instruction before he left.

Don't leave the city of Jerusalem. Wait here and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. So they waited.

And they prayed. And then one dramatic morning on this festival that people celebrate in Jewish faith, there was the sound of a rushing wind that hit the city.

[ 10 : 14 ] people heard it and people came running to see what was going on because it made that kind of impact. The people in the room not only heard it but they felt it and they could look around and what we have in front of us is a story that says it looked like there were these things that looked like flames that were on top of each of their heads.

And this group of people who was afraid, afraid to get arrested because the people who had killed Jesus were looking to kill his group too. Once that happened to them, they weren't afraid anymore.

They went into the streets and they shared the news and people who had come running to see what had happened and what all that commotion was heard Peter preach a sermon.

And it said thousands of people came to Christ that day. Thousands of people. That story happens regularly throughout Acts.

These sort of dramatic moments and people coming to the faith, coming to Jesus because of what those who have encountered him, what those who have had these moments with the Holy Spirit were able to do.

[ 11 : 32 ] It's a fascinating conundrum for us because we are people who have conquered things. We are people with dreams.

We are people who get what it takes to get from A to B or to make things happen. We are people who are good at that. But we're going to be real.

Okay? I'm going to strip away a little filter here because a lot of us as we sit in churches long for days when the church was a little more crowded.

Many folks can look back and remember a time when there were more of us. That there seemed to be this ongoing sense of fewer and fewer people who engage what we believe matters so much.

and so we're feeling some kind of way because we're like well this is the truth. Jesus is the way the truth and the life.

[ 12 : 37 ] We know it. We share it. We believe it. And yet we are still struggling like this. And I want to read you something interesting when it comes to this idea of dreams and the Holy Spirit.

came across this in a devotion I was doing this week and it spoke really powerfully to me. It says author Simon Possonby was summarizing a Welsh minister named Martin Lloyd-Jones pointedly when he asked this if we have what the first Christians had then why do we not do what they did?

We must conclude that either God gave them more than he has given us or we have failed to avail ourselves of what he has given us.

I want you to hear that again. we must conclude that either God has given them more than he has given us or we have failed to avail ourselves of what he has given us.

That same spirit do you as you sit here today really think that the Holy Spirit that came on Pentecost that first morning is different than the Holy Spirit you received when you said yes to Christ?

[ 14 : 18 ] Because if you do we need to have a conversation. That is of course the same spirit that did that. And if that same spirit lives lives in you in you that same spirit that worked in those early churches that same spirit that revived all of their hearts that same spirit that connected people who had never heard of Jesus immediately to him if that same spirit lives in your heart then why do we feel so powerless?

Because that's how a lot of people live even if it's not what we say. That what we are up against is simply too big. That the problem is too immense.

that this just can't be done. We don't have enough money. We don't have enough people. We don't have enough this. We don't have enough that. And so those things we hope for, those things we dream, those things that we believe matter just seem too hard to do.

Friends, I would ask when was the last time you really tapped into the power that God has already given you?

When was the last time you really sought it out? When was the last time you prioritized making sure that it was near to the surface and not sort of on the shelf over here?

[ 16 : 13 ] because that is probably our Achilles heel. See, here's the thing about dreaming.

It's great to have dreams. We all have them. We all have dreams. We all have goals. We all have stuff we want to accomplish whether we want to admit it or not. But I think that if we are struggling and coming up against all this sort of stress and anxiety, if we're feeling some sort of dissatisfaction and disconnect, if we're working really, really hard and it feels like it's not satisfying the way it's supposed to satisfy, I would ask you again, have you really tapped into the power that's already available to you?

Because here's where we get this wrong. I want you to think about your dreams and goals for a minute. The things that you're working for right now, the things that matter to you.

And if you really want to tap into the Holy Spirit, here's something I want you to think about. I want you to ask two questions. Is this dream ultimately about my desire or God's glory?

Is this dream ultimately about my desires or God's glory? Because there's nothing wrong with wanting things.

[ 17 : 49 ] God says in the word, it's very clear that God is, it brings joy to God to give us the desires of our heart. But, and we all know this, we say it, but sometimes I think we forget it when we try to live it every day, is we say that God's not Santa Claus.

But, when we come to God and just want the desires of our hearts, we're treating God like Santa Claus. God's and so if we are about a relationship with God, if we want to go deeper and have more of that intimacy with God, if we would have more of that power, that peace, all that stuff that Jesus promised, all the stuff we read about, the question is, are you really only using God to get what you want or are you really seeking a relationship with God?

Because that changes everything. Because the thing is, remember, God doesn't need us to do anything. God can do whatever God chooses.

God is almighty, God is sovereign, God doesn't need our help. What God wants is us. God and so he invites us into the work with him.

He invites us into relationship with him. So we can do this together and we can experience what God offers. We can experience God himself in these unique ways.

[ 19 : 29 ] God doesn't need our help. God just wants us. And if we're just here to get what we can get from him, we've missed the point.

we fundamentally missed the point. The second question I would ask you is this. Is the dream that you are dreaming, is the goal that you are trying to achieve, is it realistic?

That sounds like a weird question to ask. but is it realistic? And everybody, you know, we're smart people. We're practical people. And so we're like, we figure it out.

We say, okay, if this is what I want, here's how I get there. So you map it all out. And then there may have been some dream out there. Something that you said, ooh, no, that's just not realistic.

I can't do that. Friends, this may come as a shock to you. But if your dream is realistic, meaning you figured out how to get there on your own, that's not God's dream for you.

[ 20 : 49 ] It's not God's dream for you. You know why it's not God's dream for you? It's because God is never going to put a dream on your heart for God that's not going to take God to achieve.

I want you to hear that again. God is not going to put on your heart a dream that's not going to take God to achieve. So if you can just do it by yourself, you don't need God.

Which means that dream, as positive as it may be, as good as it may be, and as nice as it may be in all them things, if you can do it without God, it's probably not God's dream for you.

Because think of what we were just saying. God wants to be in this relationship with us. So why would God just hand you the mission and send you out there and say, come on back when you're done?

No, God wants to work with you. God wants to work in you. God wants to work through you because that's how we experience that relationship and love of God.

[ 22 : 07 ] So if you're just out here on your own doing it and not caring about God and don't think you're going to need God's help, when does God get to do the God thing for you?

You see, that Pentecost thing, remember what Jesus told the disciples?

Wait here in Jerusalem and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and then you will be my witnesses in Judea and Samaria and to all the ends of the earth.

That's going to take God's help. they can't do that without God. That's just simply not going to happen. In other words, that's why they needed to wait for the power.

That's why they needed the Holy Spirit to get it done. And so look at your own dream. Look at the things that matter to you right now.

[ 23 : 18 ] Are they things that you're all excited to do and you don't need God to do? Because the challenge for us is this.

Most of us are pretty clear about what we want to do and what we do is we come and we ask God to do it for us. All right, here's what I want. Help me out. as opposed to asking God what God's dream for me might be.

God, what do you want for me? What's your hope for my life, my heart? Because remember, all the disciples had jobs, they had plans, they had little life maps that they were going to live out.

But then Jesus came, changed everything. That might be true for us. That's dang scary.

Nobody wants their whole life map and safety and comfort all just turned upside down. Nobody going to ask for that. But here's the thing. if we would understand and know that peace of mind, that peace of heart and that strength that seems to drive us even when we don't want to keep going and we don't know why we want to keep going.

[ 24 : 48 ] When the mountain feels so high and we don't know how we're going to get over the top, but there's still that thing inside you that says climb. What you realize is that strength isn't your strength.

What you realize is that power isn't your power. What you are doing is walking in the purpose that God has given you and God is equipping you to get it done. And yeah, you're going to hit headwind.

You're going to hit resistance. There's going to be stressful and anxious times. It doesn't just get handed to you. But the difference is as we read in scripture, you do it with a peace that surpasses all understanding because you know God is with you.

And that's the peace that is often missing in that striving and working and sweating that most of us do every day. So if you would understand truly the power that you have, if you would access what dwells inside you already, what you have claimed, what you have promised, just like our young people today, think about what we said.

We all reaffirmed what we believe. I believe in the Holy Spirit. Y'all said that. Do you really believe in the Holy Spirit?

[ 26 : 16 ] Because if you believe that he's here, if you believe that he's inside you, if you believe that he will do what he said he will do, then tap into the power you already have and let it make a difference in your life.

The Holy Spirit is not just an also ran in a sidecar we bring along for fun. The Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit. And so let us believe that.

if we would achieve the things that God wants us to achieve, if we would experience what God wants us to experience, if we would make the difference in this broken and hurting world that we are called to make, if we walk in the dream that God gives us, as opposed to just our selfish dreams, God will bring us to that place.

Tap into the power you already have because God is waiting. Amen? And amen. Loving God, thank you for the gift it is to know that you are present here with us now.

That you dwell in each and every heart. That you empower us to do amazing things. Things we could never do on our own because you are working with us and through us in the world.

[ 27 : 44 ] Lord, let us hear your voice. Let us seek your face. and let us trust that you have given us what we need to accomplish these amazing dreams. Not dreams that enrich self, but dreams that glorify you.

Dreams that help those who don't know understand who you are and the difference you can make. Dreams that grow the kingdom. Dreams that take care of your lost and hurting children.

Dreams that will push us into places that are uncomfortable and hard and we will suffer and struggle at times but we will do it knowing that you are at work in us not we ourselves and you will see us through.

Lord God thank you for the gift it is to know you in this way and to have seen the fruit in our lives already. Let us continue to strive to do and be who you dream we can be.

Amen. Well this has been an amazing and powerful and blessed morning. Movement of the spirit among us so beautifully and amazingly. And so with that as we prepare to go into the world and live our faith this week I want to highlight two things that are in your bulletin.

[ 29 : 00 ] Remember your bulletin is always a resource. Those of you who are online can access an online copy as well. Two things. One, DJ has a special ask this week related to Thursday night dinners in Niagara Falls.

He's looking for some more donations and resources so please read the piece in the bulletin to figure out what it is you can contribute to help us with that successful ministry. Second thing is our last general conference conversation is coming up this Tuesday at 7 p.m.

There's been a lot out there about what it means and what it's about and what happened at the general conference. Please come and have this conversation so you can hear the facts and what it may mean for our local church.

So that being said, remember your bulletin is a resource. There's more announcements and meetings in there so please use it and keep your calendar updated as you live your faith. Now let's receive our benediction.

Loving and gracious God, we know that you are with us in ways we can't possibly imagine. Let us live into your dream for us as you continue to give us power and peace with your presence.

[ 30 : 08 ] now in the name of God our creator and king, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our savior, and in the name of the Holy Spirit our advocate and our sustainer.

May God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children. Amen. All are welcome to join us for a reception in the fellowship hall immediately after service and go in peace.