

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Cross of Glory Evangelical Lutheran Church

Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophecy

Joel 2:28-29

'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Parents have the privilege of watching their children grow from infancy to adulthood. Along the way, there are many milestones you witness. You get to see them take their first steps. You get to hear them speak their first words: “Mommy” or “Daddy” or, in the case of one little boy I know: “Golf ball.” You get to watch them go to preschool or kindergarten for the first time. You get to watch them play organized sports for the first time or hear them squeaking the first notes out of a new instrument. You watch them begin high school and then graduate from high school. You send them off to college or into the workforce. You may watch them find a spouse and have children of their own. Those of you who have been through this process from start to finish would probably agree that it all goes by quickly. Those of you who are in the middle of it need to appreciate what a blessing it is to see your children reach these various milestones. Do you remember the day when you first heard your son or daughter prophesy? That may sound like a silly question. But in our reading from Joel today, we hear the promise: “*Your sons and daughters will prophesy.*” As we look at this prophecy of Joel, which was fulfilled at the first Pentecost, we see that it is still being fulfilled today.

What do you think of when you hear the word “prophet”? Perhaps you think of one of the great prophets of the Old Testament—someone like Isaiah or Jeremiah. Those men certainly were prophets. They received a special commission from God to go and speak his Word. That, in the end, is the definition of a prophet—one who speaks God’s Word. In the Old Testament, prophets were called directly by God and given a message that was unique to their time and situation. Sometimes they were called to bring a harsh message, calling for repentance. Sometimes they were called to tell the people what was going to happen to them in the future because of their rebellious ways. Sometimes they were called to speak a message of hope concerning the Messiah who would come to save his people.

Joel was one of these prophets. We don’t know too much about Joel beyond the message we find in his book. Joel apparently spoke his prophecy at a time when the Israelites were experiencing an infiltration of a great number of locusts. Joel compared these locusts to the coming judgment of God upon their wickedness. Joel then gave the people a stern call to repentance, telling them to “*return to the Lord your God.*” Joel continues by telling the people what the Lord’s response will be after they turn to him in faith: he will open his hand of blessing upon them. That brings us to the verses of our text today. Joel looks into the future and sees something wonderful. He prophesies: “*And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream*

dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ *Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*” You can imagine how amazing that must have sounded to the people of Israel. They thought of God’s prophets as a select group of people—the few who were chosen by God to receive an outpouring of his Spirit and speak his Word. But Joel spoke of a time when all people would receive God’s Spirit and prophesy—men and women, old ones and young ones.

From the time Joel first spoke that prophecy, we move forward some seven or eight hundred years to time of our reading from the book of Acts—the great day of Pentecost. Pentecost is a word that means fifty. The Jews celebrated Pentecost every year, fifty days of the celebration of the Passover. It was a time to bring to the Lord the first fruits of the harvest as an offering of thanksgiving. But this year was different. The Passover celebrated fifty days earlier was unlike any previous Passover. This was the Passover that all the previous Passover celebrations had pointed forward to as Jesus gave his own life as the Lamb of God upon the cross and brought salvation to all who trust in his blood. This Pentecost would also be different from all the previous Pentecost celebrations.

The followers of Jesus had gathered together in a room in Jerusalem. There they waited for the outpouring of God’s Spirit that had been prophesied by Joel and promised to them by Jesus. God kept his promise. The coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by the sound of a rushing wind and the appearance of what seemed to be tongues of flame. More importantly, the coming of the Spirit was accompanied by a proclamation of God’s Word to all the people who were gathered in Jerusalem as the disciples were able to prophesy (speak God’s Word) in many different languages. The apostle Peter equated this special outpouring of the Spirit with the prophecy of Joel, which is before us. The message that was spoken that day was similar to the message Joel spoke to the people of Israel. Peter told the people, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*

Now we move forward some two thousand years to our present time. What do we see? God is still in the business of keeping his promise and pouring out his Spirit. The Spirit is no longer accompanied by the sound of a violent wind or the appearance of tongues of flames. But that does not mean that God’s Spirit is not present. In fact, we know his Spirit is here among us. He has promised that his Spirit works through the means of grace—through the Word and the Sacraments. When you received the washing of rebirth that is called Holy Baptism, you received God’s Spirit. When you come to the table and take the bread and wine and, together with those elements receive the body and blood of the Lord, the Spirit assures you personally of your forgiveness. When you hear God’s Word spoken or read the Bible on your own, God’s Spirit speaks to your heart and strengthens your faith through those words.

As the Spirit works in your, he also works through you. It’s amazing to think that as you speak the Word of God to others, the power of the Holy Spirit accompanies your words. In this way, you become a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. I have the privilege of publicly

proclaiming God's Word in this church every Sunday. But I am not the only one who is able to prophesy in this congregation. All of our members—sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, singles, grandparents—they all are able to prophesy because they all possess the Spirit of God. That is a wonderful thing. And it is really a blessing to watch Joel's words being fulfilled among us.

As amazing as it to be able to speak God's Word and prophesy whenever we want, we also need to realize another truth. We need to realize that as much as the Spirit is at work in our lives, the devil is also hard at work. He is trying to entice us away from the Word and Sacrament. If he succeeds, if we pull ourselves away from the means of grace, there is no way for the Spirit to work in our hearts. The Word and the Sacraments are the only tools he has. And so the encouragement is simply this: let the Spirit do his work. Don't pull yourself away from the means of grace. Rather, make the Word an integral part of your life. As you stay connected to God through his Word, the Spirit will keep you in the faith and give you the ability to remain faithful until you receive your crown of glory in heaven.

Think of the original meaning of Pentecost. It was a day of bringing first fruits to the Lord. On that special Pentecost day after Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples witnessed the first fruits of the Lord's great harvest of souls. Those were the first fruits, but many more have followed since. And there are still many more to come. Pentecost reminds us of that. The Spirit still has work to accomplish. May he use each of us, may he use this congregation, to accomplish his mission. **Amen.**

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