

Saint Marks UMC, Pentecost Sunday May 24, 2026

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Fellow Jews^[a] and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ (Acts 2:1-21 NRSVUE)

IT WAS A LOVELY SPRING AFTERNOON – A STORY

Bill and Sally are walking down Washington Street East in Charleston, West Virginia. Bill is holding forth on one of his favorite topics:

BILL – I am so sick and tired of all that these Christian Nationalists are doing. They are committing the crime of identity theft to Jesus.

I remember that the evangelist Billy Graham WARNED back in 1981:

“It would disturb me if there were a wedding between the religious fundamentalists and the political right. The hard right has no interest in religion except to manipulate it.”

Bill continued: That was from Billy Graham. These folks give Christianity a bad name, and we need to stand up for what Christianity is really about. What do you think, Sally?

SALLY: Well, I am a Pentecost Christian, and ...

BILL cut her off and said – you see; that’s just what I’m talking about. You Pentecostal fundamentalists are giving Jesus a bad name.

SALLY: Excuse me, Bill. But I believe you are using labels in ways that are harmful. I said that I am a Pentecost Christian. Do you know what happened on Pentecost?

BILL: I know that you Pentecostals believe in speaking in tongues that nobody but your kind is able to understand and that you think you are better than others, who don’t speak in tongues. Do you also handle snakes in worship?

SALLY: On Pentecost, people were empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak in the languages of people from all the nations around them in order to share the good news of Jesus with everyone. THAT, my friend is **the exact opposite of those Christian nationalists that you were complaining about.**

BILL: Oh. Yes. I suppose you are right about THAT, when you actually read the scripture. But don’t you Pentecostals believe all kinds of weird things about the Holy Spirit?

SALLY: You mean things like people having visions of how life can be better and striking out in faith to accomplish such visions. Like what Peter preached on Pentecost? Is that the weird stuff you are talking about?

Or do you mean weird things like repeating every Sunday in worship over the bread and cup of holy communion:

Pour out Your Holy Spirit on us, gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and fruit of the vine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.”

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.

Or perhaps you think it’s weird that we Pentecost Christians are more interested in **EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** through prayer than in merely sitting around and discussing different **THEOLOGICAL IDEAS ABOUT** the Holy Spirit?

That we Pentecost Christians are more interested in a **LIVING RELATIONSHIP** with the Holy Spirit than in **MERELY DISCUSSING IT?**

Or, perhaps, you think it’s weird that we Pentecost Christians believe what Jesus said that when he ascended into heaven he would send us the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that we would do even greater things than he did.

So, instead of merely checking the checkbook about what ministry we think we can afford to do, when we are led by the Holy Spirit to do Kingdom work, we **step out in faith knowing that we WILL FAIL if we only rely upon our own resources**. But we do it anyway, because we believe that **what the Holy Spirit leads us to do, the Holy Spirit will empower us to do**.

Are those the weird things that you think we Pentecost Christians do, Bill?

BILL: Geez, I had no idea. ... Wait a minute. Why are you stopping here?

SALLY: I'm going into my church for a prayer meeting, Bill. We are seeking direction in doing our church's ministry. And we are truly dwelling in relationship with the Holy Spirit, not racing ahead based on OUR ideas. We want, and will wait in prayer for, the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, just like those Christians on Pentecost.

BILL: But, Sally, this is St. Marks United Methodist Church. You said you were a Pentecostal.

SALLY: No, Bill. I said I am a **Pentecost Christian**. I also happen to be a United Methodist. But **MORE IMPORTANT THAN LABELS**, which seem to shape much of your thinking, we are interested in being as connected to the power of the Holy Spirit as were those Christians on Pentecost.

And, oh by the way, we also believe that the **FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** are (as Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians):

- **love**,
- **joy**,
- **peace**,
- **patience**,
- **kindness**,
- **goodness**,
- **faithfulness**,
- **gentleness**, and
- **self-control**.

Mmmmm ... That pretty much puts us in the spirit and attitude of BUILDING PEOPLE UP, **not using labels to tear people down nor to make folks afraid of people only because they are different from us**.

If you'd like to get a taste of that Holy Spirit, I'd be happy for you to come in and join us in a time of prayer and action.

[So what do you suppose happened next? I'll leave it to you to write your own conclusion to this story.]