

The Wonderful Blessing Of Pentecost.

Text: Ezekiel 36:22-28

Suggested Hymns:
131, 354, 134, 772, 132

- 1) Who Bestows This Blessing Upon Us?
- 2) What Is The Precious Nature
Of This Gift And Blessing?
- 3) How Does This Blessing Enrich Us?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ezekiel 36:22–28, ²² *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. ²³ And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.*

²⁴ *For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. ²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are celebrating one of the three great and joyous festivals of the Church. On each of these festive days we speak and sing of the wonderful works of God, of those works by which and through which God has blessed and is still blessing us.

We all know something of the joys of Christmas, of its glory and its blessing. It is only a few weeks ago that we tasted the joy and peace of Easter.¹

Now, it is true, that if there was no Christmas and Easter, there could be no Pentecost. But, on the other hand, it is also true that, if there was no Pentecost, we would know nothing of the joys of Christmas, and the peace of Easter. May God grant that the blessed message of each of these days may always continue to the end of our lives to be the joy of our hearts!

There is need for such a prayer; for the powers of darkness want to rob us of these rich blessings of God; especially the spirit of error wants to take from us the great and priceless blessing of Pentecost Day.

And I repeat, if the blessing of Pentecost Day is taken from us, the other gifts of God cease to bless us personally. Without the Gift of Pentecost we could have neither a single Christmas carol, nor a single Easter hymn, nor could we sing them.

Let us therefore on this joyous day give attention to that of which the prophet in our text also speaks in sublime, incomparable, and beautiful words: — *The Wonderful Blessing of Pentecost*. Concerning this subject the prophet in our text answers three questions. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Wonderful Blessing Of Pentecost Who Bestows This Blessing Upon Us?

At first sight it may seem that it makes very little difference who gives us a gift, if the gift is precious in itself. But it is only at first sight that it may appear so. After all, it makes a great difference who gives us a gift.

God had commanded the Jews to bring burnt sacrifices, first-fruits, and the offerings of the harvest; but after these Jews, through their sin, had become hateful to God, God refused their gifts.²

We read of a similar situation in Proverbs 28:9, ***One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.***

And God has told all people that He does not want their praises and prayers if their persons are not pleasing to Him.³

At one time, when a man offered Peter money, Peter in very forcible language refused the money.⁴ It was not because Peter thought that the money in itself was a poor or evil gift. That money of Simon's was just as good money as

any that existed at that time; but Peter did not want this money from Simon as long as Simon was what he was.

Yes, it makes a big difference from whom a present comes. The Bible forbids us to take presents from certain people, namely, from those who wish to give us presents in order to bribe us.⁵

And does it not make a difference whether a bride receives flowers from her bridegroom or whether they are given to her by some other person?

Do we not treasure a prayer-book or Bible which a dear father or mother has given to us because of the giver?

Now, this blessing of Pentecost of the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, and that is what makes the gift so precious. God is the One from whom all blessings flow. If we are children of God, God is our dear heavenly Father. This means that no one is more dear to us, no one more loved by us, and no one more closer to us, than God.

To no one do we owe so much gratitude, to no one are we so greatly attached in heart and mind and soul as to our dear Father in heaven, from whom all our blessings come. The smallest of our blessings, the greatest of our blessings, they all come from Him. Remember that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

And that is the same dear, precious Father in heaven who gives us the blessings of Pentecost. In explicit words our text calls attention to that. Note the pronoun of the first person "I", especially in verses 25 and 26.

God promised us this Gift in the Old Testament.⁶ In the New Testament Jesus repeated and emphasised these promises. We read in John 15:26, ²⁶ ***"But when the Comforter comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."***⁷ In each case we are assured that the Giver of this Gift is God Himself.

And the very fact that God in the Old Testament makes so much of this Gift and emphasises the fact that He, the Lord of lords and King of kings, the Creator of heaven and earth, is the only One who is to bestow this Gift, shows us and indicates to us what a very precious Gift this is.

No man in his own power, no Church, no king, can bestow this Gift if God does not bestow it. Just as God gave us His beloved Son to be born of a woman, to assume flesh and blood, just as God alone could raise His Son from the dead, just so God alone can give us this precious Gift of Pentecost.

Note also what it is that moved God to give us this Gift. We read in our text, ²² ***“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake. Not our merit, but God’s truth and faithfulness is what moved Him to give us this Gift.***

Let us apply this lesson to ourselves. We ought therefore to be impressed today with the truth that we cannot of our own reason or strength give to ourselves the Holy Spirit. He, the Giver of all our gifts, is the only One who can bestow this Gift upon us.

Let us be sure always to receive it from Him, just as our Saviour has impressed this upon us in these words written in Luke 11:13, ¹³ ***If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”***

Let us in this connection also not forget that every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of lights. God does not give poor or shabby gifts. And this is one of the gifts which He especially emphasises and recommends to us.

2. The Wonderful Blessing Of Pentecost

What Is The Precious Nature Of This Gift And Blessing?

But not only does the Giver of this Gift insure its preciousness, but our text tells us also of its priceless nature. What is the nature of this Gift? Our text tells us: It is God’s own Spirit, ²⁷ ***I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.***

It is not some material gift. True enough, God does give us material gifts, food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all our goods; indeed, this whole world and the sun which blesses us during the day and the stars which twinkle at night, these all are the gifts of God.

The government that protects us, the friends who cheer us, our loved ones who bless us, all these are God's gifts. And we certainly should appreciate these gifts and thank God for them.

But this Gift of Pentecost is something greater than all of these. Even though you had all those earthly blessings of which I just spoke, if you are without the Gift of Pentecost, you are poor indeed.

Even though you have no friends, no relatives, and are otherwise poor, even if you are without health, if you have this Gift of Pentecost, you are by this Gift alone a world-conqueror, and a kingdom and a throne are awaiting you. For the Gift of Pentecost is God's own Spirit, is God Himself. Could God give you anything richer than Himself, than His own Holy Spirit?

Consider also that by the Gift of Pentecost God's Holy Spirit enters your heart. And that is the Spirit of Truth, as we read in John 15:26, ²⁶ ***“But when the Comforter comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.*** Through Him you can know all that may be known of God here in this world.

Oh, how puzzled and confused, how perplexed and troubled, are many people because they do not know the truth. But God, through this Gift of Pentecost, gives us His own Spirit of Truth, who guides us through the Word of Truth⁸ into all truth.

Thereby He does not only, like some earthly teacher or philosopher, expound a theory. No, by this Gift He persuades us fully of the truth that we are sinners,⁹ and of the truth that Jesus is our Saviour.¹⁰

Oh, there are many false prophets and spirits in the world! Indeed, Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.¹¹ And this deception is not an insignificant matter. These deceptions mean our temporal and eternal ruin; for Satan is a liar and a murderer from the beginning.¹²

There is only one way of escape from these murderous and ruinous deceptions, and that is through the Gift of Pentecost. In this way the Spirit of Truth enters into our heart, leads us into all truth, reveals to us all deceptions, and protects us against all falsehoods. What richer gift could we desire than this?

Oh, let us pray for this Gift, let us ask God to bestow it upon us in richer measure!¹³ And for this purpose let us be sure to use God's Word daily; let us crowd His courts that He may bestow this Gift upon us through His Word, for this Gift is given through the Word of God.¹⁴

3. The Wonderful Blessing Of Pentecost How Does This Blessing Enrich Us?

But the preciousness and worth of this Gift of Pentecost is seen also very clearly from its effects in us and upon us. And our text calls attention to just this point. It answers for us the question: What does this Gift of Pentecost achieve in us and for us?

The first thing that is mentioned in our text as an achievement of this gift of the Holy Spirit is this, ²⁵ *Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.* In other words, it effects cleansing.

Through the Holy Spirit we receive forgiveness of our sins. Our sins are washed away. We are pardoned and forgiven in the sight of God. We were scattered among the heathen, and we were of the heathen and the pagans, but by the Holy Spirit God gathers us, takes us from among the heathen and the unbelievers and the wicked, gathers us into His own holy land, into His holy Church, into His family.

We are His forgiven and pardoned and adopted children, so that we are now a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy and special people, just as the prodigal son was received into the home and to the bosom of his father.

But not only does this Gift bring to us cleansing and forgiveness of sins; it also changes our nature. Our text says, *I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* Without the Holy Spirit our heart is a stone; there is no spiritual life in us; we are dead in trespasses and sins.

Just as corruption, filth, parasites, and scavengers live upon a dead carcass, so all manner of sins and vices live in an unconverted person. But by the Holy Spirit this dead body is brought to life.¹⁵

The holy life of God comes into us and our hearts are made alive with faith, with love, with hope, with courage, with all spiritual gifts, heavenly virtues, and activities.

We see that in the lives of the saints. What a shameful person was Paul before his conversion, and what a saint he became by the gift of the Holy Spirit!

What was Peter when Satan had driven out the Holy Spirit from his heart and he fell into grievous sin? But what a beautiful testimony issued from that man when the Holy Spirit came upon him!

How desperate was David when Satan gained the victory, caused the Holy Spirit to depart from him, and made his heart a cesspool of iniquity! But when the Holy Spirit re-entered the heart of David and lived in it again, what words of precious content came from him, words that we sing continually in our churches and never tire of repeating in our private devotions!

What a monster of folly, of superstition, and of self-righteousness was Luther without the Holy Spirit! But what a brilliant light among Christians and preachers and teachers of the Church he became when through the Gospel the Holy Spirit entered his heart and enlightened his soul!

Every unconverted person is a cursed being, a burden unto himself, and a centre of infection to others; but let the Holy Spirit enter such a person, and from a monster of selfishness and iniquity he is transformed into a saint, into a child of God, into a centre and fountain of blessings to himself and to others. We read in John 4:14, ***14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.***”

Do you not see what a very, very precious Gift this Gift of Pentecost is? The Gift of Pentecost, that is the Gift you need for your soul; that is the Gift which your children need; that is the Gift which your wife, your husband needs; that is the Gift which we need here in our church.

Oh, let us pray for that Gift — and be sure that God wants to give that Gift to us. Come, then, to that fountain from which this Gift flows into our souls, the fountain of God's holy Word.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,¹⁶

Come, Holy Spirit, come;
O hear my humble prayer!
Stoop down and make my heart Your home;
And shed Your blessing there. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Psa. 118:13-24

² Isaiah 1:11-15

³ Proverbs 1:24-31

⁴ Acts 8:20

⁵ Exodus 23:8

⁶ Prov. 1:23; Joel 2:28; Isa. 44:3; Zech. 12:10

⁷ See also John 16:7

⁸ John 17:17

⁹ Rom. 3:23

¹⁰ John 3:16

¹¹ 2 Cor. 11:14

¹² John 8:44

¹³ Luke 11:13

¹⁴ Acts 10:44; Gal. 3:5b; 1 Pet. 1:12

¹⁵ Compare to Ezekiel 37:1-14

¹⁶ 772, 87 Rejoice and Sing