

Pentecost Sunday – June 5, 2022 – Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam Wisconsin

Psalm 104:1, 30-35 – Praise the Lord for the Work of the Spirit

Praise the LORD, my soul. LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. ³⁰ When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. ³¹ May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works—³² he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke. ³³ I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. ³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD. ³⁵ But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more. Praise the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD.

Dear fellow believers in Jesus, richly blessed by the Holy Spirit!

The verses which guide our meditation this morning may seem like an unusual text for the Pentecost Sunday, the festival of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 104 and the previous one, which was written by King David, are twin psalms. Each begins and ends with the phrase, “Praise the Lord, O my soul.” Psalm 103 is one of the seven penitential psalms in which the author confess his sinfulness and then speaks with confidence of the forgiveness which comes through the promised Messiah. It is a psalm which praises God for his promised redemption. Even through the redemption had not been accomplished the psalmist praises God for what he has promised and so is as good as accomplished.

Psalm 104 praises God for his works of creation and preservation. It is verse 30 which directs our attention to the Holy Spirit. Listen again to that verse: “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground”. This psalm which praises God for the work of the Spirit has been used for the Festival of Pentecost since the early years of the Christian Church. Today as we celebrate Pentecost these verses encourage us to

Praise God for the Work of the Spirit!

We can do this because the Spirit gives life. The Spirit was present and active at the time of the creation. Genesis 1:2 says: “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” The creating activity of our Triune God is clearly portrayed in verses 2-30 of this Psalm. Remember when God finished with creation on the sixth day he assessed his work and declared that it was “very good.” Verse one of Psalm 104 agrees with that saying, “O Lord my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty.” This is the physical life giving work of the Spirit. He continues to nurture that creation, despite how human sin has marred it. The psalmist says about the creatures of creation, “These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.” (vs. 27, 28).

Today though we want to especially reflect on the spiritual life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. The Epistle and Gospel lessons today reflect that work. On that first Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to the disciples just as Jesus had promised in the Gospel lesson. He ignited the flame of faith in the hearts of 3,000 souls that day as he enabled the disciples to teach and preach in the native tongues of the pilgrims which has come to Jerusalem to celebrate the spring harvest. Jesus promised that the Advocate or Counselor would come and pour out his blessing on his people. Recall what Peter told the crowds that day after his preaching had terrified them as they recognized their sinfulness: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off—and for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38, 39). So we have every reason to praise God for the work of the Holy Spirit. He has done his powerful work in your hearts through the means of grace, the Gospel in Word and sacrament. St. Paul reminded the Romans that this spiritual life-giving work is done by the Holy Spirit by the tools which he has given us to use in

our churches and in our communities. He wrote: *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.”* (Romans 10:17)

Our verses today also have a stark warning that the work of the Holy Spirit can be resisted. Verse 30 reminds us that even though creation was perfect that it now needs to be renewed. Sin has contaminated creation and causes terror in the hearts of the crown of creation, the human race. Look at verse 32. *“He looks at the earth, and it trembles; he touches the mountains and they smoke.”* And in verse 35 the psalmist says: *“But may sinners vanish from the earth, and the wicked be no more.”* This reminds me of David’s prayer in Psalm 51: *“Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me”. (vs. 11)* St. Paul warned the Thessalonians *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Jesus, Himself, warned *“But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. He is guilty of an eternal sin.” (Mark 5:29).* These strong warnings of dire consequences urge us to continue faithful in using Word and sacrament. Through these the Holy Spirit will continue to do his spiritual life-giving work.

In these times the Holy Spirit has plenty of competition. Voices in our society are so subtly calling us away from our Savior, from our gracious God and his Word and will for our lives. They try to convince that the desires of our minds and bodies need to be satisfied with ways of our own choosing. They condemn us for trying to evaluate all the choices according to God’s Word. So it is vital that we continue to listen to the stark warnings of turning our backs on the work of the Holy Spirit. We are truly blessed when listen to his calling and rejoice that he has done his powerful works in our hearts.

Because the Spirit’s work in our hearts has given us spiritual life, that is faith in Jesus, we certainly have a multitude of reasons to join together in praising God for the work of the Spirit. We join with the psalmist in his joy and celebration. First, he prays: *“May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works.” (vs. 31)* Each day we come to the Lord seeking his continued blessing on his people and the proclamation of the Good News of salvation through Jesus. We ask that the work of the Spirit will received continued blessings which bring such great joy to our almighty God. It is easy to get frustrated as we see church attendance declining and immorality spiraling higher and worse than ever. But rejoice that the Holy Spirit has not been silenced. The power of the Gospel can still be seen as unbelievers come to faith around the world.

We can make it our daily activity to join with the psalmist in praising God for the work of the Spirit. We proclaim with him: *“I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.” (vs. 33).* We do that especially today as we celebrate Pentecost and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The psalmist also encourages us to regularly reflect on the work of the Spirit: *“May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord.” (. 34).* When we come together here in his house, even if we join remotely, what blessed thoughts come to mind as we see our fellow sinners gathering at our Savior’s feet to be assured of forgiveness and our place in eternal glory. Take time to rejoice that you have this great blessing.

Four times in Psalms 103 and 104 the psalmist used the phrase, *“Praise the Lord, O my Soul.”* And then at the end of Psalm 104 he adds *“Praise the Lord.”* This time he used the Hebrew word, “Hallelujah”. This is the first time it appears in the book of Psalms, but certainly not the last. The word appears only in Scripture in the book of Psalms.

So we join with psalmist in praising God for the work of the Spirit. May that Spirit fill your hearts all the days of your lives until you are joined with him and clothed in the splendor and majesty of heaven. Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Say it with me --- Praise the Lord, Hallelujah. Amen.