**Acts 2:1-21 May 20, 2018**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from Acts chapter 2 here re-reading these words. “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It seems the Church, always needs work. There is just something about a church building that always needs to be fixed. In Kansas, where I was blessed to serve at St. John Lutheran Church, there was some talk of repairs that needed to be done, but it was mostly put off. Then one day, as hail pelted and destroyed windows and siding, ripping and tearing away at the front of the church so that when you looked at it you would think that the entire building was damaged so much it would be torn down, then the work began. New siding, new windows, a new roof, anything that had been put off was done because it had to be done. But again, that work is never completed, the church building deteriorates and needs repair, we’ve seen it in our own building here at Trinity Lutheran Church in Onekama. We repair and work so that the building doesn’t fall and crumble. We need a place to worship which is why we are diligent in the work that must be done, even something as beautiful as the cross had to come down and be replaced. But still, when we look at the cross tower, it is a sad site, and it has been for some time. It can remind us even of the words of a particular hymn that speaks about church steeples falling and church buildings being destroyed.

The first verse of the hymn “Built on the Rock” goes like this: “Built on the Rock the Church shall stand, even when steeples are falling. Crumbled have spires in every land; bells still are chiming and calling, calling the young and old to rest, but above all the souls distressed, longing for rest everlasting.”

While we have lost the cross for a time, we still have our church building, we are fortunate that we can continue to worship here, even if there is no siding, even if we wait for the rest of the work to be done. Compared to others who have lost their church building and lost everything to destructive weather, or even persecution, we are blessed and lucky.

When the hailstorm came and damaged St. John Lutheran Church a news reporter came and asked me to say a few words about the destruction. I simply stated that we were blessed by God that no one was injured, and that while it will be a lot of work and cost quite a “chunk of change”, ultimately the Church isn’t a building. The church is more than just pews, and hymnals, and altars in solitary places, the church is made up of those who come together to hear the Word of God preached and to receive His Holy Sacraments. Whether it is here in Michigan or even Jerusalem, where so many were gathered in one place to celebrate Pentecost, and something truly miraculous happened. Fire appeared over the heads of the disciples, but not to destroy,“divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The fire of the Holy Spirit rested upon them, giving them the ability to take a true message of the Gospel and preach it to many people of different areas and languages, Galileans speaking to Parthians and so on, residents of Egypt and parts of Libya, and Luke goes on and on to not leave any group out. Every church has a bump in the road, a time of building and renovation, where repairs change the usual way that the building looks and operates, and while this may be our time of transition here at Trinity, Pentecost was the beginning of the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. It was the very beginning for so many churches that would be started by these men who heard the true Gospel preached in their language through the miracle of the Holy Spirit.

For the church is created, cultivated, and grows through the work of the Holy Spirit and not man. It is the Spirit that works in the hearts of believers, it is the spirit that causes the seed to take root and grow. The men who stood and spoke in multiple languages were simply the sowers, the ones who were sharing the true message, as we later hear Peter speak the truth to those gathered and dispelling the lies that would discount the work of the Spirit on that day. As much as any preacher would love to take the credit of conversion or to take credit for the fact that you are sitting in church hearing this message today, so many years after that first Pentecost, we can’t. We are just imperfect instruments. It is the work of the Spirit that creates faith through Baptism, it is the work of that Spirit that causes you to hear God’s Word preached from the pulpit and it is the work of the Spirit that then changes your actions and attitudes to go forth from this place and continue to share the Gospel with others, to continue the work that was started on that first Pentecost so long ago.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us the message of God’s Word, which is exactly what was happening on the day of Pentecost. But the true message of the Gospel, is meaningless if the need isn’t recognized. Peter cuts right to the heart of the matter in his sermon on Pentecost, for the message of the salvation won by Christ would be missed by those people if they didn’t believe that they needed to be forgiven. Peter starts his sermon in a continuation of Acts chapter 2 verse 22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know – this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” This wonderful man, Jesus, the very Savior, the very Messiah, you killed him. That’s the message of Peter on Pentecost. Imagine that scene, finally hearing a message in your own language by someone who has no right speaking it, only to tell you that you are guilty of killing the very Son of God.

It may seem harsh and out of place, but it cuts right to heart of that group, and to us as well to see that we are in need of the forgiveness won by Jesus Christ our Savior. For without a true need, there is no way that the gift can be given. If you aren’t sorry, there is no way God can forgive you. It would be like for you to give me a boat with no trailer, or no truck to pull it. It would be meaningless to me, I have no idea how to maintain it, and I have no way to use it. And rather than this being some junky boat that barely runs, imagine in your mind this is an expensive, new, huge, and luxurious boat, that would be the envy of anyone who saw it. But for me, it would be useless, and I would just get rid of it. I would have no need of it. To me it is useless, to others it would be priceless.

That is our salvation, but if we don’t recognize the need for salvation, if we don’t recognize our need of a Savior due to our sin, it is meaningless. It’s why Peter begins this important sermon, on this high and miraculous holy day of the Church Year with such harsh words. Martin Luther sums up the intentions of our actions and our disservice in the work of our vocations in his Small Catechism, by simply asking these questions under the Confession section. “Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?” If we are honest, and stop for a second to meditate upon those words, and truly read God’s Word when it comes to the perfect standard of salvation and forgiveness, we will recognize that need, just as the crowd at Pentecost did. We are guilty of sin, sin that led to Christ coming and dying on the cross. So Peter’s words remain true for us as well, “This Jesus, this wonderful perfect Son of God who loves you unconditionally, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” So we see the need of this same Jesus to save us, because we are the rebellious, disobedient and unfaithful children of wrath rather than children of God.

But Peter goes on! “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” Christ rose for you. He died for you. And He sent His Spirit, for you as well. In our Gospel lesson we see how the Spirit is the connection between us and the gifts of forgiveness and salvation won by Jesus Christ on the cross. “The Holy Spirit will glorify me” Jesus says, “for he will take what is mine, and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” It’s yours. Salvation, life, peace, hope, comfort, all the gifts of the cross and the empty tomb are yours because of the Holy Spirit. Because it has been poured out on the world as it was on Pentecost and it’s still poured out today. The Holy Spirit continues to work in the hearts of those lost to show them they are found. The church exists to facilitate that, and we are blessed to have a place where we can gather around his Word, where we have a physical font of water to Baptize, and an altar in which to receive the Lord’s Supper, and pews and hymnals and an organ and all the rest. Thanks be to God for this gift, but even if it were all taken away, and tomorrow this very church were to collapse, if it were to be gone with no chance of repairing it and we had to start all over, Trinity Lutheran Church would still stand. We would still be brothers and sisters in Christ, and the bells would still ring to call us to a rest that is a picture of the rest to come, and a rest for the troubled hearts and souls of the world.

We continue to worship, even as our church building remains incomplete. We look forward to the day when the cross shines over the Lake, when the work is complete and we can rest for a bit knowing that our building is secure. We are living proof that the church goes on, even if the building needs repair. But no matter what happens in our lives, no matter what calamity and sadness the world throws at us, even if Satan himself were to destroy this church, our home, or even our earthly bodies, may we remember and find comfort in the truth that we are God’s children, we are beloved of Christ and nothing, absolutely nothing, as Paul writes in Romans 8 will change that, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels not rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Amen.