

May 24, 2026

The Day of Pentecost

Texts: Acts 2:1-21; John 14:23-31

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” These are truly beautiful words that our Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples. Who doesn’t want peace? Peace between people, peace between nations, peace around the world. And far from being some silly, unrealistic dream, that peace is what our Lord sends forth at Pentecost.

When we first consider the Day of Pentecost, though, it might not seem like such a peaceful event. It begins with the disciples all gathered together in one place. Then what happens? “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.”

Doesn’t sound like the most peaceful event, does it? Loud sounds from heaven, people looking like they’re on fire, sudden proclamations in all sorts of languages – it might seem a little crazy, not quite peaceful. Some of the first outsiders to witness this think that everyone must be drunk, which isn’t really a description of a peaceful event.

Peter, taking the lead and inspired by the Holy Spirit, raises up his voice to address the crowd and explain what is going on. Surely this will calm things down, right? The apostle says that what is taking place is the fulfillment of a prophecy spoken through the prophet Joel hundreds of years before.

What sort of things does the prophet speak of? The last days. Blood, fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun being turned to darkness and the moon to blood. Does that sound like the sort of thing you’d say to a crowd who are worried about what’s going on? Or does it seem that those sort of apocalyptic images might stir things up even more?

But the Holy Spirit has a reason for speaking these words through Peter, a way in which He will grant peace. Those words come at the last part of the quotation of Joel: “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” That salvation is the great peace which the Lord Jesus gives. The words of Joel may very well bring fear because they speak of the end times, be that the end of the world or the end of our own lives.

That’s a fearful thing for the unbeliever, because he doesn’t know for sure what awaits on the other side. Some of the most hardened, back in Bible times and still today, delude themselves into thinking that death is the end. Your body stops working and eventually breaks down, your mind just shuts off, like going to sleep and never waking up. And your soul? If such people are willing to allow for the existence of the soul – and many are not – they might say it just sort of disperses into the universe or something. It’s a crushing, depressing thought, one without any hope of true peace.

For that reason, very few people, especially historically, have thought such things about death. Much more common is the idea of dying and facing some sort of judgment. Pagan religions of all sorts

feature different myths of standing before gods or other beings and having one's life or worthiness judged.

Even those who claim to be “spiritual but not religious” usually have their hope of a life to come based on being a good person, living a life of love and tolerance toward all, or other vague virtues, all in the sense of avoiding some sort of judgment that would happen if you weren't good enough or something. Again, vague, but the sense of a judgment at death and the need to avoid it are written into their hearts and the hearts of all people.

Even if they don't have the details right, all people know that the wrong things that they've done deserve punishment, and so they try to find some way to avoid that, some way to have peace.

That peace is precisely why Jesus came. There is no way man can earn it for himself; Jesus came to give it to us, “to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross,” as Paul would describe it in his letter to the Colossians.

That looming debt that we can't see but we know is there, Jesus paid it for us. The accusations that we don't want to admit but that we know are coming on the day of judgment have already been answered by blood of Jesus. The requirement of righteousness that we cannot live up to, which our sinful flesh curses as impossible and unfair but which we know deep down is still there, Jesus has satisfied through His perfect innocence and righteousness. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has brought peace for all.

Does that mean that everyone will be saved? Are all people given this peace merely by virtue of existing, or by having vague spiritual inclinations? No, they aren't. As Peter preached, as Joel preached, one must call on the name of the Lord to be saved. How does this work? Is calling on the name of the Lord something that we do by our own decision or will? Again, no. Paul writes in Romans 10, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?”

This calling on the name of the Lord comes from faith, and faith through hearing the word of Christ. Through the word of Jesus and the working of the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives His salvation, His peace.

That's what we see at Pentecost. How shall these people be saved who have never heard of Christ? Christ sends the Spirit from the Father to His disciples, just as He promised, so that His saving Gospel may be preached to them – and in their own languages, no less! The disciples aren't just babbling in random languages to show the power and presence of God the Holy Spirit. Rather, the Spirit is using His power to enable the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to people of all nations. He is showing how the words of Jesus before His ascension are true, how His disciples will be His witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and all the ends of the earth.

At Pentecost, the saving word of God begins to go forth among the nations of the earth, and it does so in the power of the Spirit. The Lord begins bringing in peoples from all over the earth, not through the old covenant of circumcision, which made one a Jew, but through the new covenant,

through the circumcision of the heart. The Kingdom of God spreads rapidly, bringing in men and women from all over the world and uniting them under the throne of Christ in heaven.

Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians – all are given peace with God through the gift of faith in Christ Jesus. At Pentecost, the peace of God begins to go out into all the world.

Yet this is not peace that the world gives, as Jesus clearly states. And so, the world often opposes it, claiming that it isn't peace but rather a source of conflict. Those first disciples were often arrested for being rabblers and disturbers of the peace. As Paul went on his various missionary journeys, his opponents frequently followed him from one place to another, stirring up crowds and inciting riots so that the authorities would arrest him or send him away. Early Christians were brought before Roman governors and magistrates, charged with working against the order and stability of the Empire.

These charges were all nonsense, of course. The Scriptures teach very clearly that Christians are to live peacefully with their neighbors and to pray for those in authority over them. But the prince of this world, the devil, is absolutely opposed to the Prince of Peace and those who have been given God's peace, and he will stop at nothing to slander them and twist and corrupt their proclamation of peace.

Even today, God's people are called idiots and fools, bigots and oppressors, misogynists and homophobes, racists and extremists. They are brought before judges for such things as refusing to bake cakes celebrating sin or praying silently outside abortion clinics.

It is sad, both for the Christians who suffer for righteousness' sake, but even more for those fighting against them. In opposing the word of God, the world pushes away the very thing that can give true peace. By shunning the Gospel, such people shun the source of true forgiveness, true compassion, true love. As the Church, we must pray for those lost in darkness and deceived by the devil, that they may be brought to repentance and faith, led into the light and life of Christ Himself. We pray for our persecutors, that they too may be given the peace that Jesus gives.

And as we pray, we also ask that the Lord would work through us to share His message of peace with those around us, as He did through the disciples at Pentecost. He likely won't cause us to speak in different languages – though that is certainly within His power – but His power is still at work through the proclamation of His word.

When you speak God's word to other people, be they your family, your friends, your neighbors, or whoever else God has placed into your life, God the Holy Spirit is at work there just as He was at Pentecost to grant faith and change hearts. He is still bringing sinners to repentance through the Law and granting them the sweet comfort of the Gospel. He is still letting all people know and believe that, whoever they are, Jesus died and rose for them.

At Pentecost, God gave His Church the wonderful calling of proclaiming His peace to a world full of turmoil and conflict. That conflict is still there today, bringing with it fear and anxiety and despair. But we have the answer in the Good News of Jesus, which gives peace – not as the world gives, but true and lasting peace. We may be in the last days, but we know that our God is with us, giving us His peace now and forever.

In the name of Jesus, amen.