

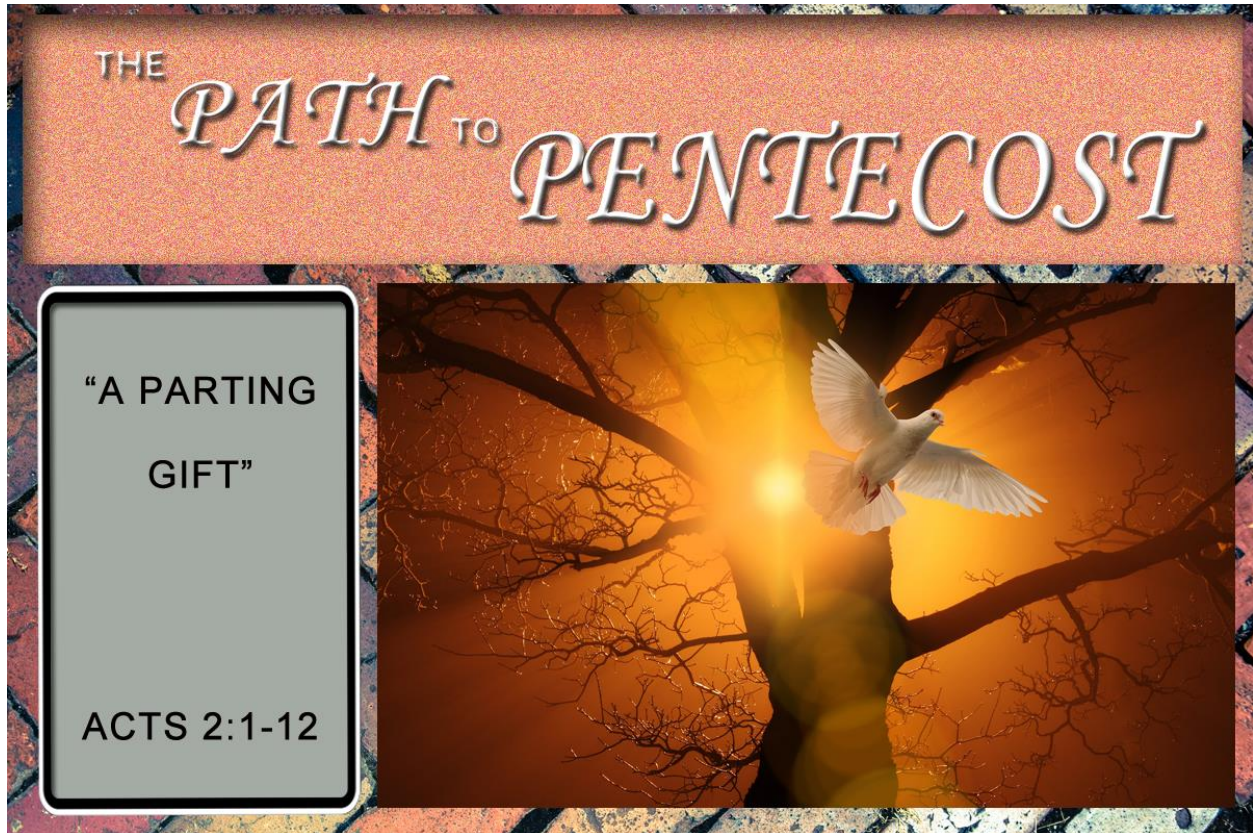
5/28/2023 (Pentecost) (Memorial Day)

"A Parting Gift"

SPECIAL MUSIC: "Holy Spirit Comes"

Peace Way Christian Center

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gt16nVZ0qSQ>



### **Acts 2:1-12**

- 1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.**
- 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.**
- 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.**
- 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.**
- 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.**

**6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.**

**7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?”**

**8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?**

**9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,**

**10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome**

**11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”**

**12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”**

**A PARTING GIFT**

O Jerusalem,  
Home to our past,  
As our mothers  
And fathers cast  
Their hopes toward  
Freedom from bondage  
As they paid homage  
To the coming of Messiah.

O Jerusalem,  
Home to our present  
As our mothers  
And fathers in covenant  
Gather at the table,  
And joyfully congregate  
As we celebrate  
With our precious Messiah

O Jerusalem,  
Home to our spirit  
As our mothers  
And fathers came to hear it  
Words and fire  
Doves and flame  
God's words proclaimed  
In every tongue as Messiah

**O Jerusalem,  
Beacon for our future  
As we, our souls  
And spirits are sutured,  
To become one  
With the Holy One  
Father, Spirit, and the Son  
Through the gift of Messiah.**

**O Jerusalem,  
The birthplace  
Of God's Holy Bride  
A place of grace  
For the people of God  
A community blessed  
In common unity  
A parting gift from Messiah**

I am a fan of adventure movies. The best ones are when a mysterious box shows up at someone's door unexpectedly, and the person that it is addressed to or left for is a distant progeny of some famous explorer. When the box is opened, there is a key, or an artifact (like a watch or pocketknife), or a note with cryptic words and letters, or a map that would lead someone to a supposed treasure. And, after crossing continents and risking their lives, evading bad guys, solving mysterious puzzles at every step, they arrive at the locked chamber, chest, or cavern. Only the hero or heroine of the story has what is necessary to unlock the door so that they can enter the final chamber and take in the wonder of the treasure. Then the bad guy always shows up and tries to take it away but fails.

I am excited as they head off on their adventure, but even more so, I enjoy the anticipation that is created by the first arrival of the artifact, key, map, or note that convinces them that they are not on a wild goose chase... that there is really some reason to take a chance and follow the clues in hopes of finding the treasure. I think my fascination with the anticipation is that the package seems to come from beyond the grave. The person who sent it having long been gone from this earth, perhaps disappeared on some reckless adventure. And yet, knowing that there would be a time when the quest would be reengaged, that the ancestor took the time to prepare the item so that it was delivered to his progeny at the appropriate time with adequate directions to get them started on their hunt for the plunder.

The search was often seen to be foolish because so many had tried before, but none of those individuals had the key artifact that they needed to get started.

**From the Goonies, to Indiana Jones, to Laura Croft, to Sam Witwicky, to Alan Quartermain, to Benjamin Franklin Gates, and on, and on, and on. Each one with a heritage and desire to continue the quest of an ancestor. None of their stories could be told if those ancestors had not generated a spark and through generations encouraged and inspired those who came after them.**

**Many of you know the story of my fiancée Dana and how she moved here from Alabama to take care of me after my heart surgery. The night of my surgery, she had a massive heart attack and never made it home from the hospital. It was several months after she passed that I received a package from her best friend in Alabama. I waited until Christmas to open it. Inside the packaging was a painting that she had been working on. She had finished it before she came to take care of me. The painting isn't a masterpiece, but it is priceless to me. I have it hanging in my living room.**

**Sometimes, God brings unexpected things into our lives. Even though they come to us at times after we believe a door has been closed, when they arrive, they serve as a reminder or inspiration from the people that have gone on before us. They help pull us out of a spiral and into a new orbit around God with us leaning into Him that much more. Those moments when those items show up can be both exhilarating and painful. But more important, they are purposeful as God uses them to gently put us back on track knowing how fragile we are after all we have been through.**

**Eleven disciples. Sitting and waiting. They have not yet replaced Judas, so they are feeling a bit lopsided already, maybe incomplete is a better word. For**

three long years they had all been taking care of each other. For three long years, they had listened to Jesus as He taught them with parables, performed miracles, and brought out the best in them. They had watched him die on the cross and then rise again on the third day. They had come full circle in the context of Jesus' ministry and had come together once again by the Sea of Galilee. And then they had listened as Jesus that he was about to ascend to His Father, and they were all to go to Jerusalem to wait... for something. A key. A map. A note. A box. A Spirit something. A parting gift. A present from God Almighty that they would be unable to open until after Jesus had returned to His Father. Sitting around and doing what they had been told to do... wait.

**1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.**

**2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.**

**3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.**

**4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.**

They did not know what was actually happening to them, but I'm pretty sure that this took them all by surprise. They must have been astounded with each other as each began to speak in languages they did not know. Maybe they thought of trying to run from these tongues of fire as the it descended on them. Let's face it, this is not how they envisioned the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was a white dove

like the one that descended on Jesus after He was baptized. This didn't appear to be anything like that. This didn't make a whole lot of sense. I don't know if it was the Holy Spirit that held them in place, their own stupor, or their deep desire to receive this promised gift. Add to this the fact that as each one engaged with the flames, they began to speak in foreign languages. This was not like the Tower of Babel where the confusion of language was meant to confound the communication between the builders. No, this ability to speak other languages had a specific purpose. It was meant to provide truth and context to every living soul listening to the message of the gospel.

**5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.**

**6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.**

At this time in Jerusalem, if you were a visitor, you would probably have to seek out someone who knew your language so that you could transact business. You could pay someone to translate conversations for you. There is a reason that Luke tells us that these visitors to Jerusalem were God-fearing Jews from every nation. Many of these people came from countries where Hebrew was not commonly spoken. Nor was Aramaic or Greek. Each nation had its own unique language. What is even more amazing is that each one of these visitors heard the message in their own language above the cacophony of hearing the message being spoken in all the other languages. They were able to pick out which message were directed to them.



**These visitors then turn to each other:**

**7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?”**

**8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?**

**Galileans. Land of fishermen. Not known for their academia. And yet, here they were speaking foreign languages. Languages that people felt they couldn’t and shouldn’t know. But being able to understand them, provided a window through which the disciples could deliver the message of the gospel, the message of Jesus Christ, the message of Prophecy fulfilled, the message of the arrival, crucifixion, and resurrection of Messiah.**

**9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,**

**10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome**

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**“We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” How beautiful that must be. So beautiful in fact that it begs those listening to respond with “What does this mean?”**

**I'm going to step out on some important revelations to be found in this text. Any time we can have a conversation with someone about our Lord Jesus and they start asking questions, it is a truly wonderful thing. It means that they want to continue the conversation and we have the opportunity to be able to share with them what Jesus has done for us.**

**Remember Philip meeting up with the Ethiopian on the road? Philip starts the conversation with "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the Ethiopian responds with a question, (read that as an open door to respond to someone and provide input into their search for answers). The question that the Ethiopian asks is "How can I, unless someone explains it to me?"**

**Can we ask for a bigger door than that? What might have happened if Phillip had said, "Please give me a few minutes and I will go get someone who knows this stuff better than I do." No, my friends. This is about being able to explain in our own words our relationship with our Creator and what He means to us. This is our open door. This is our "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel."**

**The second thing that I want to mention is the context of this passage is this. I don't speak a second language. I have had three years of Spanish, three years of French, one year of Greek, and three years of Latin. But I still don't speak a second language. I am embarrassed by that. And while I need to start studying Hebrew, I have been convicted that I need to at least gain some skill with conversational Spanish. Something more than asking "Donde esta el bano?" and**

ordering food that I am confident I can pronounce. That is a personal goal of mine. I will be calling upon my Spanish speaking friends to help me.

God gives each of us skills to meet the needs of our communities. The question becomes, are we willing to step out on faith to integrate those skills into our daily walk with Christ so that we can meet the needs of those people and organizations that God brings into our lives? Are we willing to take a stand and say that our walk with Jesus is more important than any other part of our lives?

That's a tough question. We all know what the answer should be. But are we willing. How does the song go? "Are ye able said the master, to be crucified with me?" "Yea," the sturdy dreamers answered, "To the death we follow Thee." But I want you to do something even more difficult. I want you to live for Christ. I want you to embrace the blessings that He offers as you follow Him where He leads, as you use the skills and resources He has blessed you with.

On this glorious day of Pentecost, the day we celebrate the birth of the Church, the day of the joining of the Holy Spirit with the souls of men, we submit ourselves to our Savior as our spirits join with His in unity.

God Bless You All

AMEN

Sing Sweet Sweet Spirit at the end of the message

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjDk7W5jDLQ>

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