

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
May 15, 2016

People Who Changed the World
Acts 2:1-8

2:1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

2:2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

2:3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

2:5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

2:6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

2:7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

2:8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

1. Transformation of the Disciples

What did the Holy Spirit do on the day of Pentecost? The Holy Spirit transformed the disciples. He gave birth to the Church, and changed the world.

First, let's take a look about the transformation of the disciples. The disciples were fleeing and hiding some weeks ago, but now they became bold, and spoke, "God has made

him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” even before the Jewish leaders who crucified Jesus. They knew no fear. The Holy Spirit gave them courage and boldness.

They also were filled with wisdom by the Holy Spirit. The people, who saw the disciples speaking in various languages, said, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?”

They called the disciples “Galileans” feeling scorn for them. Galilee is remote from Jerusalem, the capital, and next to the Samaritan and Canaanite land. They thought there were only poor and uneducated people. But, the disciples talked that Jesus Christ was the Savior in logical and well-reasoned way. Even Jewish religious leaders couldn’t offer counterarguments.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit filled the disciples with good characters. We cannot be witnesses for Jesus Christ with boldness and wisdom only. We need more. If we don’t have faithfulness and humility, our boldness and wisdom do not work for God. The Holy Spirit transformed and continued to transform the disciples to the Christ-likeness. They were persecuted, but they were respected at the same time because of their good characters.

Stephen, the first martyr, was “full of grace and power, ” and his face was like the face of an angel. (Acts 6:8, 15) The Holy Spirit gives us power, wisdom, and dignity.

The Holy Spirit is now working in us, believers. The Bible promises in Acts 2:38. “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

“The gift of the Holy Spirit” means that the Holy Spirit Himself is the gift to us. When we believe and are baptized, God gives us a wonderful present. It is the Holy Spirit. God gave us His Son for our salvation. And God gives the saved ones the Holy Spirit that they can live for the God-giving mission and purpose. God always gives Himself. No more greater gift than God Himself.

No one can be transformed by himself. Only God can. If we have desire to be transformed, the Holy Spirit will work within us. Do we realize we have such great Person in us? I pray we may know the Holy Spirit more and trust in Him always.

2. Birth of the Church

Secondly, the Holy Spirit gave birth to the Church. What is the Church? It is not only a gathering of the people who respect Jesus or favor Christianity. Church is not man-made. It was in God’s plan.

Jesus said, “I will build my church.” (Matthew 16:18) Acts 20:28 reads “the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” Jesus came to the world to build His Church. He shed His blood on the cross and died for the Church. And Jesus Christ returned to heaven and sent the

Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave birth to the Church.

The Holy Spirit, who gave birth to the Church, also has been protecting, raising, and leading the Church until now. Acts 9:31 says, “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” We also want to have the encouragement and comfort of the Holy Spirit, and to taste His peace. We also want to build up the solid foundation of faith.

Above all we want to have “the fear of the Lord.” If we don’t love, respect Lord Jesus and don’t put Him first, our witness for Christ has no power. People are looking what we are doing rather than listening what we are talking.

This is a story that I experienced in Japan. A wife had faith in Christ. She started to join the worship service every Sunday faithfully. The husband didn’t like she went to church every Sunday. But, she never gave up the worship service even the husband said, “Why don’t you skip the church this week?” The wife always came back home immediately after the service and fixed lunch for her husband. So, the husband couldn’t object her church attending.

One Sunday, a guest visited to the wife just before the worship service time. The husband thought that she would skip the service. However, the wife invited the guest to church and went to church together! Seeing his wife, the

husband also began to join the service with her and was led to faith in Christ. After becoming a Christian the husband said, “If my wife does not go to the service faithfully, I never have faith. I thought this faith is true seeing my wife kept the service even I opposed her.”

We want to be led by the Holy Spirit and walk putting the Lord first. And we want to see the new Christians are added to the Church.

3. Change of the World

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit changed the world. By what? By the gospel. By whom? By the believers filled with the Holy Spirit.

At that time, Roman empire ruled the world. Rome was a great empire across the three continents; Asia, Africa, and Europe. The emperor was called “son of gods” who brought peace on the world. And the peace was called “*Pax Romana*”. But in reality, the world was not ruled in peace, but for war and terror. The defeated countries became a part of the empire or subject states. The people became slave and were demanded to worship the emperor. No-mercy punishments were given to the rebellion against Rome.

In the time of Jesus, Israel was a part of Syria state ruled by a Roman governor-general. Rome levied a tax on them. As the Apostles’ Creed says, “The Lord was crucified under Pontius Pilate”, our Lord also was killed by the power of Rome.

However the Lord is risen from the dead. The Lord, who conquered the power of death, should conquer the power of Rome. The emperor persecuted Christians and put them on cross, as his governor-general put Christ on the cross. But the gospel never stop. It has been spread over the empire in every corner of it. It reached the royal guard and those close to the emperor, too.

One of the early church leaders sent a letter to the emperor. He wrote, “We are praying for authorities, and never hurt anyone. But, your Majesty, please know there are many Christians near you.” AD 313, the persecution ended by order of Emperor Constantin. The crucifixion, such a cruel punishment, was abolished. The empire was divided to west and east in 395, and the west empire disappeared in 476.

The Church was growing after the Roman empire ruined. The gospel spreaded beyond the territory of Rome. The Church won the world greatest empire not by military power or violence but by the word of love. The Church has established the true and everlasting peace in Christ instead of false and temporal peace.

The disciples spoke in various languages on the day of Pentecost. It shows the gospel should spread all over the world. We cannot find neither English nor Japanese in the list of Acts 2:9-11. However, the Lord had already known the day which the gospel will be delivered in English and Japanese. He led the history in order that we hear the gospel

in our languages. Many Spirit-filled people are preaching and witnessing for the Word of God. Pentecost still continues.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and transformed by the Holy Spirit, we can change the world. The life of those close to us will be changed. Our family and the local community will be changed. The society and the country will be changed. And the world will be changed.

Don't forget "the Galileans" changed the world. God does not use only who has talents, social status, or money. It doesn't matter for God that you have or have not such things. God seeks the person who gives himself to the Holy Spirit, praying "Transform me!"

Pentecost is the day that the disciples was transformed, the Church was born, and the world began to change. This day, we also want to dedicate ourselves to the Lord by renewing our faith, and go forward being led by the Holy Spirit.

(Prayer)

Dear Father, we stand before you with the renewal of our faith.

First, I pray for the junior members. They are still students, but they can serve You and witness their family and friends for You. Help them to do so with joy. Lord, help them establish a good habit of reading the Bible and praying faithfully every day.

Next I pray for English-speaking members. Help them have a good fellowship for encouraging each other's faith. And, make both language groups one in Christ for serving you.

I pray for the Japanese-speaking members. We thank you the privilege to hear the Word of God in our mother language. Lord, help us to use this privilege for living by the Word and live in the Word. Help us pray earnestly and faithfully for the salvation of the Japanese-speaking people around us. Make us Your witnesses in this area.

I pray for those want to be baptized. You promised the Holy Spirit to those believe and be baptized. The first step of the Spirit-filled life starts from the baptism. Help them to take the step of faith.

Almighty God, transform all of us by the Holy Spirit, and use us to change the world. In the name of Lord Jesus whom we love, Amen.