

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
May 21, 2017

In One Mind

Acts 1:12-14

1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

1:13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

1:14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Pentecost is the day that the Holy Spirit descended. It is important day that three thousand people were baptized and Church was born. However, many calendars, even Christian's do not indicate "Pentecost." I received a calendar from a seminary. I was so disappointed because I couldn't find "Pentecost" in it.

Then, I marked the seventh Sunday after Easter and wrote "Pentecost" by my hand. Jesus showed that He was alive during forty days after His Resurrection, and ascended to Heaven. The disciples spent nine more days before Pentecost. Therefore the next Sunday after forty-nine days, that is seven weeks, after Easter is Pentecost.

Today's Scripture told what the disciples did during the nine days after the Lord came back to Heaven. What did they do? What would you do, if you were the disciples? The Holy Spirit was about to come.

An extraordinary thing was about to happen. That was what no one had experienced. What would we do in such case? Could we do something other than prayer? Acts 1:14 says, “All these ... were devoting themselves to prayer.” Only one thing we would do should devote ourselves to prayer for waiting for the great works of God. Today, let us learn our priority work from the prayer of the disciples.

## **1. What Did They Pray?**

What did the disciples pray? Though the Bible keeps silence, I think we can use our imagination. I think that they prayed in repentance first of all. Here we see the eleven names of Peter and other disciples. They were chosen disciples. But, they had forsook Jesus and denied their Lord when He was suffered. And, they didn't believe that Jesus was resurrected. The Holy Spirit is literally “Holy” One. Those who were about to receiving the Holy Spirit also should be sanctified. It is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us, but we, humans, also need to seek for the holiness in our repentance.

The disciples also thought of their mission given by the Holy Spirit, and prepared themselves for the mission in their prayers. Jesus told the disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8) when He came back to Heaven. The Holy Spirit sanctifies, strengthens, and leads us; gives us wisdom and various kinds of the spiritual gifts. But the primary purpose of His work is to make us the witnesses for Christ.

Seeking for the Holy Spirit and being fulfilled by the Holy Spirit is

amazing thing than any others. However, if we forget the purpose of being fulfilled by the Holy Spirit, we may become a self-satisfaction, and make the Holy Spirit sad by boasting he spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit as if they are our own abilities. The purpose we receive the Holy Spirit is that we are able to witness Christ by serving Him, His Church, and people. The disciples prayed that they might maintain the purpose and live for the mission from the Lord.

## **2. How did they pray?**

Then, how did they pray? Acts 1:14 says, “All these .... were devoting themselves to prayer.” The main verb of this sentence means “devote”, “continue to”, “spend much time”, or “busily engaged in”. In most case, the word occurs in conjunction with “prayer.”

Let me list some verses that use the word. Acts 2:42 reads, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” You can find the same word, “devote” there. The disciples were devoting themselves to prayer before receiving the Holy Spirit, and they devoted themselves more to the prayers after having received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 6:4 reads, “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” The apostles announced that they would devote themselves to prayer. But did only the apostles devoted themselves to prayer? No. Romans 12:12 says, “Be constant in prayer,” and Colossians says, “Continue steadfastly in prayer.” We can find the same word, “devote” in these verses. Not only the apostles, but also all believers should devote themselves to prayer.

The first century Christians were devoting themselves to prayer. In

another words, they were busily engaged in prayer. They gave the first priority to prayer among their ministries. But, we, modern Christians are too busy for other things and not to spend time for prayer. We may say, “We are too busy not to pray,” and use our “busy-ness” in our work or private life as an excuse of not to pray. We live in the world totally different from two thousand years ago. All of us know that it is very difficult to devote to pray in our times. Therefore I really want to ask to young believers who were baptized recently, please learn to pray and master it first before you do any other things. I want to see prayer has the first place in the ministry and Christians are always praying together here and there in the church.

### **3. Who were praying?**

Lastly, let us learn who were praying. Acts 1:15 reports that one-hundred-fifty people prayed waiting for the Holy Spirit. There were men and women. All prayed together like one person. All of the disciples got together in one place and prayed in one mind. And the Holy Spirit have fallen upon all of the one-hundred-fifty people who were praying together.

The teaches that each of us should go to God alone in prayer, but it also teaches us to get together and pray in one mind. First century Christians always had meetings and they prayed whenever they had meetings. When Peter and John were called by the council of Jewish leaders, the believers got together in a place and prayed there. After Peter and John were released, they went to the meeting and reported what happened at the council. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and prayed. After the prayer, the Bible says,

“the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued.” in Acts chapter 4.

Acts chapter 12 says, “earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church” when Peter was put in prison and was about to be killed. After Peter was saved by an angel, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. The New Japanese Bible translated Acts 12:5 “The church prayed for him” rather than “The prayer for him was made by the church” This is good translation. The church was praying before it started, and was devoting herself to prayer as growing. The church were praying, now is praying, and continue to pray in the future. We want to see the church in our times is also the “praying” church.

When many people gather together, we are encouraged by the gathering. We feel grateful to hear a prayer someone pray for us. However, praying together is not over by giving human comfort. When believers pray in one mind, and if the number of the members is many even one, and if the prayer has been prayed patiently, such prayer become a great power. Though prayers are made by us, humans, they will become God’s power beyond human power when they reach God. Let’s devote ourselves to prayer believing the power of prayer.

### **(Prayer)**

Our Father, we give You thanks for this great opportunity to pray together in one mind. Help us to devote ourselves to prayer. Make us praying congregation. Show us the power of prayer in one mind. We pray this in the name of Lord Jesus.