

Tongues of Fire

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[0 : 00] If you've got a Bible, you can turn to the New Testament book of Acts. Acts chapter 2. Acts chapter 2.

With just me reading it. But we'll do our best anyway. Acts chapter 2 and verses 1 to 13. Listen to these words. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

And suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now they were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

And when they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken. Atherly amazed, they asked, Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?

[1 : 27] Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus in Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene.

Visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs. We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean?

Some, however, made fun of them and said they've had too much wine. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Let's ask for God's help as we study this together this morning.

Our gracious God, Your word is truth. And so we come this morning looking for truth. Not that we might just have our intellects enlarged.

But that we might know You and have relationship with You. And so we pray very specially that Your Spirit would work this morning as we study the Bible. That Your Spirit would come in and take the words of Scripture and put them deep in our hearts and transform us and change us.

[2 : 39] Make us like Your Son. We want to see Jesus. We want to see Him clearly. And we want to marvel at what we see. So that we are changed. So won't You be present with us this morning.

For Christ's sake. And for His glory. Amen. So you can keep that passage open in the book of Acts chapter 2. Now we come back to our study in Acts.

We've been away from Acts for quite a while. And as you can see we're going incredibly slowly.

We're just in chapter 2 at the moment. And we're going to be in chapter 2 for a while. But if you think back. And I don't know how good your memories are.

And those of you who were there. But if you think back to some of the sermons we did on chapter 1. You might remember that if you look at all of Jesus' interactions with the disciples that He has before He ascended to heaven.

He seems to constantly stress this need for them to wait. He keeps saying to them wait guys. Wait, wait, wait, wait. Wait for the Spirit of God to come. Don't go out yet. And witness to my life, death and resurrection.

[3 : 36] I know you've seen all these amazing things. But don't go out yet. Wait for the Spirit to come. Chapter 1 verse 5 he tells them they'll be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1 verse 8 he says they'll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them. Power to witness. And so if you're reading the narrative just like a storybook of the book of Acts.

What you're doing now is you're waiting. You're saying okay well when is this happening? What are we going to see this? When are we going to see this Holy Spirit coming down upon the disciples?

Chapter 2 comes along and there it is.

They count the Pentecost as this big moment. The day of Pentecost was a harvest festival. It took place 50 days after Passover.

So the word Pentecost means 50 basically. If you're looking for that in other parts of the Bible in the Old Testament it's often called the Feast of Weeks or the Day of the First Fruits. You'll find that in other parts of the first five books of the Bible.

[4 : 33] And because it's a really important Jewish festival you've now got as you saw in the text there Jews from all over the ancient world. Both people who are ethnically Jewish and converts to Judaism all coming to town.

All coming to Jerusalem to celebrate this big festival. And it's at this point in the midst of everybody being there that the Spirit of God is then poured out. Now we only read the first 13 verses but it's a pretty lengthy chapter with a lot of detail.

And it's also a chapter that historically in churches raises a lot of questions about the nature of the Holy Spirit. What spiritual experiences for example are normative for Christians today?

How much of what we're reading here is kind of descriptive? Like look this happened but it only happened once. And how much is kind of prescriptive? Hey look this happened and it should be happening regularly in the church.

And there are also other big things going on in this chapter. Especially in Peter's sermon that he gives after this. So big questions about redemptive historical themes in the Bible.

[5 : 37] Themes that help us understand how the Old Testament fits with the New Testament. And the coming of Jesus. And how the Holy Spirit fits into all of that. So we're going to spend a couple of weeks in.

Chapter 2. We're going to not get out of chapter 2. I'm not going to put a number on how many sermons are going to come out of chapter 2. Because that would be very dangerous for me to do. But we're going to spend a number of weeks in chapter 2.

Today I want to look at the first 13 verses. And even a smaller section of the first 13 verses. At the actual details of the coming of the Spirit. So you'll see there are three signs that signify the coming of the Spirit.

That Luke the writer tells us about. Three kind of visible or audible signs that Mark had his coming. Number 1. Wind. Number 2. Fire. And number 3. Tongues.

And we're going to look at the first two this morning. The wind and the fire. If there was earth it would have been really cool. Because then it could have been earth, wind and fire. But there's just wind and fire. So those are our two things.

[6 : 38] Two points this morning. Wind and fire. Here's the first one. Wind. At the end of chapter 1. You might remember you had about 120 disciples. All gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem.

And they're all waiting. And fervently praying for the Holy Spirit to come. That period covered around about 10 days. The total period that they were doing that. And then Pentecost comes.

So look down at verse 1. When the day of Pentecost came. They were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind. Came from heaven.

And filled the whole house where they were sitting. Now you'll see in the text. Both with the wind and with the fire. That Luke is really kind of reaching for images.

To describe the supernatural phenomenon. That are taking place on that day. So he says that a sound like the blowing of a violent wind. Filled the house.

[7 : 34] In verse 3 later on he's going to say. That the disciples saw what seemed to be tongues of fire. So by way of analogy. He's trying to explain these mysterious events. He doesn't really have language.

And he's trying to grab an analogy. And say there were these crazy things happening. And this is kind of what it was like. But what do they symbolize? What does the sound of the violent rushing wind symbolize?

It's often pointed out. That the Greek word for spurt. The New Testament is written in Greek. Ancient Greek. And the Greek word for spurt. The word *pneuma*. Is the word that often means wind. Or breath. And you find exactly the same thing in the Old Testament. So the Hebrew word for spurt. The word *ruach*. Can also be translated wind or breath. So when Jesus for example.

He describes the work of the Holy Spirit. Back in John chapter 3. In the famous meeting that he has with Nicodemus the Pharisee. Where he tells Nicodemus that he needs to be born again. In that same passage. John 3 verse 8 says this.

[8 : 33] He says the wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear it sound. But you cannot tell where it comes from. Or where it's going. So it is with everyone born of the spirit.

And there he kind of plays on the words. Wind and spirit. It's the same word for wind as it is for spirit. And he likens the work of the Holy Spirit. With the movement and the sound. Of the wind. So when you are then reading Acts chapter 2. And having read all these other passages. Now you get to Acts chapter 2. And this violent rushing wind sound. Comes into the house.

It's pretty clear that this is what Jesus was speaking about back then. It's what Jesus was speaking about in Acts chapter 1. The spirit is being poured out. In some special new way. Marking some sort of new era of redemption. A new era of witness. To the life, death and resurrection of Christ. That's the first thing. It's kind of an identity marker.

[9 : 28] This is the spirit. If you were wondering when the spirit is coming. This is the spirit. The wind should be a big clue. But the wind is more than that. It's more than an identity marker. So the great New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce.

He points out that it's hard to know exactly what these disciples experienced. With the sound of this violent rushing wind. But he says there are certain things we can be certain of. And that is we can be certain of the rich symbolism that we have. In the rest of the Bible. Concerning wind. And the spirit of God. And actually in his commentary. He points back to the Old Testament.

He points back to the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a prophet who was one of the early exiles. Taken from Judah to Babylon. Kind of towards the end of Israel's history. And while in Babylon. He saw a number of fantastical visions. With all sorts of really crazy wild strange symbolism.

[10 : 26] One of the most famous visions that he had. Which he might have read before. Is the vision of the valley of dry bones. Ezekiel 37. Now the particular background to that vision. Is that Israel and Judah.

Had been reduced to next to nothing. By the great kingdoms of Assyria. And then later on Babylon. God has used these kind of mighty nations. To come in and to judge the nation of Israel. Because of their repeated wickedness and idolatry.

And it is repeated. This is like pages and pages and pages. Of your Old Testament. Of the nation of Israel. Just kind of ignoring God's law. Just worshipping false gods. And ignoring God. And so at the end. Assyria first comes in.

And they take out Israel. And then Babylon comes in. And takes out Judah. And. Israel are dead. Basically. Morally. Spiritually. And almost literally.

At this point. And Ezekiel then sees this vision. Now I want to read this vision to you. From Ezekiel 37. And I want you to listen. For references.

[11 : 26] To the spirit. To breath. And to wind. Listen to this vision. That Ezekiel has. He says. The hand of the Lord was on me.

And he brought me out. By the spirit of the Lord. And set me. In the middle of a valley. Was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them. And I saw a great many bones.

On the floor of the valley. Bones that were very dry. He asked me. Son of man. Can these bones live? And I said.

Sovereign Lord. You alone know. Then he said to me. Prophecy to these bones. And say to them. Dry bones. Hear the word of the Lord. This is what the sovereign Lord says. To these bones. I will make breath. Into you. And you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you. And make flesh come upon you. And cover you with skin. And I will put breath in you.

[12 : 20] And you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying. There was a noise. A rattling sound.

And the bones came together. Bone to bone. And I looked. And tendons and flesh appeared on them. And skin covered them. But there was no breath in them. And then he said to me.

Prophecy to the breath. Prophecy son of man. And say to it. This is what the sovereign Lord says. Come breath from the four winds. And breathe into these slain. That they may live.

And so I prophesied as he commanded me. And breath entered them. And they came to life. And they stood up on their feet. A vast army. And then he said to me. Son of man. These bones are the people of Israel.

They say our bones are dried up. And our hope is gone. We are cut off. Therefore prophesy and say to them. This is what the sovereign Lord says. My people I am going to open your graves. [13:17] And bring you up from them. I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And then you my people will know that I am the Lord. When I open your graves. And bring you up from them. I will put my spirit in you.

And you will live. And I will settle you in your land. And then you will know that I the Lord have spoken. And I have done it. Declares the Lord. So Ezekiel is told to prophesy to the wind. To the breath. Come wind. Come breath. From the four winds. Come and breathe life into these dry bones. And what is this life? What is the spirit of God? The Lord says I will put my spirit in you. And you will live. See friends. The spirit of God. Is life. Himself. We actually just said that. This morning in the Nicene Creed. I believe in the spirit. The giver of life. He brings life. And the wind. The breath.

[14:20] Well it's a symbol of that. And here at Pentecost. You have this violent. Rushing. Wind. And that word violent. There shouldn't necessarily be read. Kind of in a negative sense.

But more just in a forceful sense. And so the message of the text is pretty clear. Life. Is being poured out. Life. Is being poured out.

With force. In a new. And wonderful way. With the coming of the spirit of Pentecost. That's what's happening here. Now remember that all of this. Is within the context of witness.

That's where it starts in chapter one. The disciples are told. They need to go out. And they're going to bear witness. To this wonderful work of Jesus Christ. And it's the spirit of God. That is going to bring life.

To that story. As they tell that story. As they say. We saw all these things. The spirit of God. Is going to bring life. To that story. Story. You see. Because if you think about it. It's a pretty inspirational story.

[15:16] Just on face value. And God. In Jesus. Comes into our world. And he comes into our world. To experience our pain. And our suffering.

He walks in our shoes. He takes on flesh. And he walks in our shoes. He faces our temptations. He heals. He restores. He shows kindness.

He shows love. Inclusion. To the people. Who are kind of on the margins. Of society. And then. Incredibly. At the end of doing all of that. For three years. Incredibly.

In the most. Selfless. Of all human acts. He lays down his life. As a substitutionary sacrifice. To take away sin. He at great cost.

Takes the hit for us. Stands in the way. So it's a moving. Inspirational story. Just by itself. It's the kind of story.

[16:11] That when you listen to it. It should kind of motivate you. You shouldn't be unmoved. By a story like that. It should motivate you. To say. I want to be a better person. In light of that. I want to be a better person.

That's what inspirational stories do. When you hear. Or you watch a movie. Or you read a book. Or an article. About a heroic individual. In history past. A selfless heroic individual.

In history past. It kind of fills you with motivation. It fills you with drive. It can move you. To try and evaluate your own life. You say. Well if this person can do that. With their life. What am I doing with my life? A movie.

To make more of a contribution. To the world. To change your life. To be a better person. That's what inspirational stories do. But because. Of the spirit of God.

This story. This. Christ story. This true story. That the disciples bear witness to. Is actually. So much more. Than an inspirational story.

[17:08] Because this story. Makes dead people come alive. It breathes. Life into that. Which is previously dead. Turns dry bones.

Into flesh. Other inspirational stories. Don't do that. Can't do that. See friends. There's so much we can learn about. The spirit.

About redemptive history. From Acts 2. From Pentecost. But the thing I want you to see. Very very clearly up front. As we. Go into this chapter. Is the life giving breath of God. Rushing into this world of death. You need to see that.

You need to see that. Because you need that. You need that. I need that. We need that. This world. Needs this. Last week. Week of June. There were nearly 120 murders.

In the Western Cape. One week. The vast majority of those murders. Took place in the Cape Flats. Places like Dalft. And Elsie's River. And Younger. Many of the victims.

[18:09] Were children. Innocent bystanders. Caught in the crossfire. Of gang warfare. We have. Numerous. Communities in this city. Who live constantly.

Under the shadow of death. All the time. It's a day to day. Experience. This. This week. My family. As in. My actual. Immediate family. We had to. Come face to face. With the reality of death. So earlier this week. My wife's cousin. With whom she was very close. Tragically. And suddenly. Passed away. As a result. Of a. Surprise. Brain tumor. She has. Four children. Three of them. Are out of the house. But the youngest. Is 13 years old. So that. That young boy. Knows something. Of the harshness. Of death. In a way that. No boy. That age. Should have to know. Death is all around us.

[19:06] If we're prepared to look. If we're prepared to not. Shut our eyes. To what's going on. C.S. Lewis. Is famous for saying that.

And I quote. God whispers to us. In our pleasures. Speaks. In our conscience. But shouts. In our pain. It is his megaphone. To arouse. A deaf world. And I've always felt.

That that statement. Could be nuanced. A little bit further. So it's not just that. God shouts to us. In our pain. But that of. All pains. It is death.

The pain of death. That kind of screams. Loudest. And clearest. That something is. Fundamentally. Wrong. With this world. Fundamentally wrong with us.

With human beings. So the garden. God says to Adam and Eve. He says. You are free to eat. From any tree. In the garden. But you must not eat. From the tree of the knowledge.

[20:03] Of good and evil. Because when you eat from it. You will surely. Die. And at that point. Humanity turned their back. On their loving creator. And they embraced sin.

And so death. And pain. The pain of death. Entered this world. Both as a consequence. Of human sin. But then also. As a megaphone. Screaming out to all of us.

That things are not okay. Things are not okay. We have shunned our creator. Things are not okay. We are trapped. And we are enslaved. In sin. In these broken. Frail bodies.

Things are not okay. We have corrupt. And idolatrous hearts. That worship things. Other than the living God. Things are not okay. We are dead. We are dry bones.

Cast out in the valley. We need life. We need the breath. Of God. We need the spirit of God. We need the fear.

[20:59] We need the fire. We need the fire. We need the silent rushing wind of God. To come into this world. We don't need to be telling each other. More inspirational. Motivational stories. We need the one true story. The one true story of the king who in his own sacrificial death beat death once and for all.

We need that true story brought to life by the spirit of God in the hearts and minds of people. That's our hope, friends. That is the hope of this world.

That is the only thing that we can bear witness to that will truly, truly make a difference in this world of death. When I got the news that my wife's cousin had passed away on Tuesday morning, I was coming up for lunch at the time.

And my wife, Robin, who's up at the memorial in Underburg right now, she was at work. So I was speaking to her on the phone just to try and see what had happened and how she was.

And I said to her on the phone, I said, must I tell the kids? Or do you want to wait until I get home?

And she said, no, you can tell the kids. Thanks for that. She said, you can tell the kids.

[22:05] And I dreaded that. Having to go in and tell my daughter and my son that their aunt auntie had passed away. Now, just before you think that I kind of share all my family's intimate secrets in a seminar, I did ask my daughter for permission for this beforehand and she said yes.

But she's particularly sensitive to this kind of bad news. So since 2020, we've had some significant deaths in our family. My kids have lost two grandfathers, one great aunt who was like an aunt to them, and now one second cousin who was like an aunt to them.

And so it feels like I'm always coming every single year to them and having to sit them down and tell them someone that they love dearly is not with us anymore.

It feels like every single year, death is invading their young, fragile lives. And there's so much to take on board at that young age, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually.

And so I dread having to have that conversation. See, my kids' hearts get broken again. It's hard. But I do not know how you have that conversation.

[23 : 24] I do not know how you deal with death and this world of death without the biblical knowledge of the dry bones being brought to life by the Spirit of God. I do not know how you deal daily with your besetting sins, with anger, with pride, with lust, all these telltale signs that death is in you.

It's not just out there, it's in you. I do not know how you deal with that without the Spirit of God forcefully blowing into your life into tired bodies that are dogged by sin. I do not know how any of you can hope to make any difference in this city.

In the face of violence and hatred and poverty and abuse and death, if you aren't able to bear witness to the saving, healing, restoring message of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Friends, praise God for Pentecost. Praise God for Pentecost. Praise God that His Spirit is here in the life of every believer, making dead things come alive.

Do you have that in you? As you sit here, do you have it in you? Do you have Him in you? Have you repented of your sin? Have you trusted in your Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior that the Spirit might come into you and make His home in your heart?

[24 : 55] Do you have it this morning? Let's look at the second sign. The sign of the tongues of fire.

Have a look at verse 3. The disciples saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues or other languages as the Spirit enabled them. Now again, Luke, he's trying to explain phenomenon by way of analogy. The actual text here is a little bit tricky to translate. These dividing or separating tongues of fire. The best I can kind of give you is that it seems like little licks of flames appeared above the heads of each individual disciple.

That's the best that I can try and visualize what is happening here in this room. Now, why fire? We understand the wind, but why the fire? Well, first of the fire underlines that this truly is the Spirit of God.

[26 : 02] In case you weren't convinced by the wind, the fire just makes it absolutely clear.

Because we have back in Luke's gospel, who writes the book of Acts, Luke, John the Baptist says right at the very beginning of Luke's gospel, when he's having all these people come to him for a baptism of repentance and he's warning them about the coming of the Messiah.

He says this, chapter 3, verse 16. I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And so when the tongues of fire then come and they accompany this rushing wind in Acts 2, we can be pretty confident, well, this is the Holy Spirit.

This is what John the Baptist was talking about as Christ comes and he pours out his Spirit. But what does the fire actually symbolize? This one I think is actually a little bit harder to answer than the wind or the breath in the previous point.

If you look back in that passage in Luke 3, John the Baptist actually mentions fire two other times in that little discussion that he's having there. And in both those instances, fire is an image of judgment for the wicked, for the unrepentant.

[27 : 16] Now that doesn't really make sense when you come back to chapter 2 in Acts, because here the Spirit's being poured out on believers, on the repentant, those made righteous by Jesus Christ, who won't undergo judgment for their sin.

So I think we actually have to expand the image and look further more broadly in Scripture to understand what the symbolism is of the tongues of fire. The other dominant images of fire you find, particularly in the Old Testament, are of fire representing the presence of God and the purifying, refining work that God does in people's lives.

So let me start with that one first, with the purifying, refining imagery, and then we'll come back to the presence of God. In the Old Testament book of Malachi, right at the very, very end of your Old Testament, the prophet Malachi envisions the Lord coming to his temple in this purifying fire.

And this is particularly there, he's prophesying within the context of corrupt and unjust priests and religious leaders. So here's what he says, Malachi chapter 3, verse 1 to 4.

I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me. Now interestingly, that verse is often quoted in the Gospels as referring to John the Baptist, who's going to prepare the way for Jesus to

come.

[28 : 34] But he goes on and he says, So Malachi foresees a day when the Lord is going to come and bring purifying fire that produces righteous people who will then bring pleasing, not corrupted worship to the temple.

That's the image. You have a very similar image to that in the book of Zechariah, Zechariah chapter 13. Now really interesting for our purposes, just in case you think we're like just running around the Old Testament here for a second.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians has some of these same images recurring. So in chapter 3, Paul calls the people of God, he calls the people of God the temple of God.

He says, you are the temple of God, in which God dwells by his spirit. And as Paul talks about the kind of foundational preaching ministry that he did that set up the church in Corinth, to establish this group of believers, this holy temple indwelt by the spirit.

He says this, 1 Corinthians 3 verse 10. He says, If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is.

[30 : 37] Because the day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire. And the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.

But if it's burned up, the builder will suffer loss. But yet will be saved, even though only as one escaping through the flames. And then he says this, Don't you know that you are sold to God's temple?

And that God's spirit dwells in your midst. So there, you've got the idea. Very similar to Malachi's prophecy of the Lord refining his people with fire to produce righteous worshippers.

But Paul adds, This is the presence of the Holy Spirit who indwells his people, his holy temple. So I think it's very probable that back in Acts chapter 2, This is something, at least something, maybe not all of it, But something of the symbolism associated with the tongues of fire in the disciples' heads.

The purifying spirit of God is now in a new profound way being poured out to refine God's people, Stripping us of our impurities until only the purest gold remains.

[31 : 53] God's spirit is making us righteous worshippers. That's what he's doing. But fire doesn't just purify. It also symbolizes presence. The presence of God.

So you've got the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3. You've got the fire on Mount Sinai in Exodus chapter 19. In many places in the Old Testament, the presence of God is symbolized with fire.

But there's always distance. Distance between God's perfect presence and sinful people. So Moses has to take off his shoes as he approaches the burning bush.

People in Exodus 19 are told that even if they touch the base of the mountain, they'll be dead. This fiery mountain. There's always separation. There's always distance. There's always this impregnable void between God's presence and sinful you and me.

But then comes Pentecost. The Spirit of God rushes into the house of the disciples like a violent wind, and then little flames separate out and settle on the heads of each disciple.

[33 : 01] The purifying presence of God covers each disciple. No more separation. See, friends, with God's Spirit in us, we have that too.

We have God living in us. No more separation. We have God living in us, making His home in us, purifying us, refining us, till all the impurities are stripped away and beautiful gold.

Beautiful, beautiful gold. Righteous worshippers. There's all that remains. Don't you want that? In a world of death, don't you want that?

Don't you want intimacy with the one who is life himself? That's what our Westminster Confession says. God has all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness in and of Himself.

He alone is the fountain of all being. In a world of death, don't you desperately want intimacy with Him? The source of life. There's one person you want to be close to.

[34 : 07] Isn't it Him? Don't you want to know that He's with you as you go through this life? That He has you in His hand and He's never going to let you go.

That presence. Don't you want His refining work in you? It's painful. I know it's painful at times. To have your sins and your faults, your weaknesses brought to the fore and exposed.

But friends, as painful as that is, what an absolute relief when they are not only exposed but then taken away and expunged from your record.

When the ugliness is cut out and you become a creature of beauty. Don't you want that? Charles Wesley, the great hymn writer, captures it well with these words.

He says, When shall I see the welcome hour that plants my God in me? Spirit of health and life and power and perfect liberty.

[35 : 19] Oh, that in me the sacred fire might now begin to glow. Burn up the dross of base desire and make the mountains flow. Refining fire, go through my heart.

Illuminate my soul. Scatter thy life through every part and sanctify the whole. Friends, Pentecost teaches us a lot of things.

This morning I want you to see that Pentecost declares that the rushing wind of life, the purifying presence of God can be yours. And it can be yours through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit whom our precious Lord poured out for us.

Remember our precious Lord who went under the judgment fire of God in our place, who had his very life breath taken from him for us.

That Lord, now by his Spirit, offers us life. Offers us a fire that no longer judges, but refines.

[36 : 31] Refines us into the most precious of metals. Friends, do you have that this morning? Do you have the Spirit living in you through repentance and faith?

And if you do, if you're a believer, you're conscious that that's what's happening in you. As you go out into this world of death and as you carry in your body the signs of death and your weaknesses and your frailties and your sin, do you know that Spirit of God has come into your life to live in you and to go to work refining you with the very presence of God?

Trust in him. He will do his work. He will make dead things come alive. Let's pray. Our gracious King and our Lord, we are conscious of this world of death because it is in front of us all the time in many graphic ways.

And so we praise you this morning for Pentecost. We praise you for the pouring out of your Spirit to breathe life into death. To give us relationship with you, taking us who are dead in our sin and making us alive in Christ.

And then to put your presence in us. To purify us, to change us and transform us into righteous worshipers, Lord. We thank you for this gift.

[37 : 56] We thank you for this heavenly, supernatural work, Lord. Help us to, in this sense, lean deeper and deeper into the Spirit of God. To experience that life-giving work and to experience that refining presence.

And I pray for any person, Lord, who's here this morning who says, I don't know anything of that. I pray that they would repent and come to Jesus Christ. That they would know the love of Jesus.

They would know his costly work on the cross that made all of this possible, Lord.

Bring them to faith, we pray. Father, I pray as I look at our city and our world, that you might make us, like the disciples, witnesses of the life, death and resurrection of God.

Empowered by this life-giving Spirit. By his power to make dead things come alive. Help us to be that church, Lord, we pray. We ask for Christ's sake and his glory.

Amen. Amen.