

Sermon for: Trinity Lutheran Church, Manilla

6th Week of Easter: May 4, 2024

Sermon Text: Acts 10:45 (1st Lesson)

Sermon Title/Theme: The GIFTED Church

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The child jumps off the diving board cannon-balling into the pool, and the splash ripples out.

The fisherman casts the line into the lake and the splash ripples out. The resurrection of Jesus

is visibly witnessed on Easter morning and for 40 days following. The resurrection splash

through the Spirit ripples out from the Apostles to the early church, to the Gentiles, and to us.

As we continue our Easter season focus on the Easter church described in the book of Acts, we celebrate today that we are a GIFTED CHURCH—gifted with the Spirit through Baptism.

In His early ministry encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus had described the workings of the Spirit:

“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,” (John 3:5). In

His upper room final conversation with the disciples, Jesus had promised the gift of the Spirit: “I

will send the Spirit to you . . . When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the

truth,” (John 16:7, 13).

Everything Jesus promised was dependent on His resurrection. Without the resurrection His

words were empty. The truth was that Jesus was risen from the dead. Now everything that

Jesus had promised following His resurrection could and did happen. The disciples went to

Jerusalem as Jesus had directed, and they awaited His promise: “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 ends of the earth.” Splash! and the ripples!

Acts 2 shares the Pentecost event and Peter's sermon directing his "congregation" to the salvation story of Jesus' fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus' crucifixion, and Jesus' resurrection: "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Peter then directs the guilty audience: "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," (Acts 2:38) Peter also notes, "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself," (vs. 39).

That promise takes us to today's early church encounter (Acts 10). God dramatically leads Apostle Peter to a Gentile by the name of Cornelius. The workings of the Spirit are dramatic (I encourage your personal reading of Acts, chapter 10). The message of Jesus' resurrection was meant also for the Gentiles! The Spirit who had come in tongues of fire and a rushing wind on Pentecost came to the household of Cornelius: "The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. The believers were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles."

The gift of the Spirit was literally "poured" out through the water of Baptism. Peter noted, "'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have,' and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," (Acts 10:47-48). The ripples from the splash kept going out.

Through the gift of baptism, the Spirit brings all the blessings of Jesus' death and resurrection to us. Romans 6:3-4, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism, in order that,

church, God calls pastors to be His representatives in preaching the Word and sharing the sacraments.

We too are an Easter Church and a gifted church! We treasure the precious gift we have been given. We receive the gift joyfully! We share the gift abundantly!

Having received the gift of grace through baptism, the Spirit gives us even more! The Spirit who has brought us into the fellowship of the church, then equips us with gifts to be used to God's glory and the good of His kingdom. I Corinthians 12 states, "Now there are various gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord. . . To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good," (vs. 4, 7). The chapter along with Romans, chapter 12 lists the spiritual gifts given to the church.

A promising young student had spent almost an hour in conversation with the noted German theologian, Helmuth Thielicke. As the young man rose politely and began to leave, the respected professor observed, "You are a gifted young man." Embarrassed by the unexpected compliment, the young man blushed. Noticing the young man's momentary embarrassment, the professor quickly added, "Remember, I did not say you are a brilliant young man. I said you are 'gifted.' God has given you remarkable talents. You will be responsible to Him for the way you use them."

The advice of the professor is good in all contexts. All talents and abilities are a gift from God. The musician is gifted, the athlete is gifted, and the artist is gifted by God. There is even greater truth in the giving and using of spiritual gifts. St. Paul in the description of spiritual gifts would note that there was no such thing as a brilliant preacher. Paul only knew gifted preachers,

gifted teachers, gifted musicians, gifted artists, gifted housewives, and gifted craftsmen. All worthwhile talents come from God. The Spirit blesses the response in all vocations.

In those moments when we are tempted to parade our superior accomplishments or when we strut proudly before others, let us remember that we have nothing that was not given us. All our abilities are gifts from our heavenly Father.

With every gift there is a responsibility. Our Savior tells us: "Freely you have received, freely give," (Matthew 10:8). We are to use our talents in the service of the Lord who gave them. They are still His talents. You and I have been gifted—so that by our gifts we may serve one another and others.

How have you been gifted? You have been gifted by the Spirit! God has placed you in this time and place (and in this church) so that He might be glorified and His church might be a light to a dark world.

There was the great splash of Jesus' resurrection. Through the Spirit it has rippled out to the world. There was a splash in the baptismal font on the day of your baptism. Let the gifts of that splash ripple out through you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.