

# “Robust Spiritual Power In Pentecost”

LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian

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## **Scriptures**

Psalm 104:31-34

John 14:8-17

## **Hymns/Songs**

“Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness” 714

"Breathe On Me" 603

"Praise to The Lord, The Almighty"

## **Psalm 104:31-34**

<sup>31</sup> May the glory of the LORD endure forever;

may the LORD rejoice in his works,

<sup>32</sup> who looks on the earth and it trembles,

who touches the mountains and they smoke!

<sup>33</sup> I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;

I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

<sup>34</sup> May my meditation be pleasing to him,

for I rejoice in the LORD.

## **John 14:8-17**

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me,

Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup> “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

## ***Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit***

<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

### Insight for Worship

*Secrets of Heaven* 6144 by Emanuel Swedenborg

Despair causes those who feel it to acknowledge in an effectual and feeling manner that there is nothing of truth and good from themselves, and that from themselves they are condemned; but that they are delivered from condemnation by the Lord; and that salvation flows in by means of truth and good . . . .

Despair also causes them to feel the happiness of life which is from the Lord; for when they come out of that state, they are like those who have been condemned to death, and are set free from prison.

**SERMON:** “Robust Spiritual Power In Pentecost” by Rev. Kit B. Billings

God is a vigorous bringer of *life*, and He understands our need for immense encouragement and empowerment in our lives. The day when Pentecost happened for real as is recorded in the *Book of Acts* chapter 2 was recorded for two reasons: 1) to record for the transformation of our world the events that took place for the birthing of Christianity. And 2) so that everyone connected to the Lord’s Christian way of life could be imprinted with this saving truth: that no matter how hard, painful and discouraging life gets for us on Earth, nothing...and I do mean **NOTHING**...will stand in the way of the Lord’s personal, compassionate support for us, lifting us heavenward into God’s power of Love itself.

Jesus our Lord spoke to us about this deeply personal and intimate empowerment we all need through His amazing words in *John 14* this morning: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17) Yes, there is the historical event back then, which we know as the Day of Pentecost, but the most personal meaning of Pentecost is its message for us, today,...an awesome and powerful reminder...that when we choose personally to participate with God in the great lifelong journey called “spiritual regeneration,” a lifetime of spiritual growth and rebirths come to us. The robust spiritual power that befell the early Christians, is God’s promise of regeneration reaching its full potential, its recurring spiritual zenith, you might say.

Years ago when I was studying the literal and inner meaning of Pentecost in seminary, a correlating truth and way of understanding what this means is: the longer we each grow in the Lord’s love and wisdom, the harder and harder it gets for us to feel blue or “down in the dumps.” This is true as the Lord’s life-giving Spirit, known in Bible code language as the “Holy Spirit,” energizes and beautifies your life. The inspiration the early Christians felt was clearly what I am speaking of with you this morning---to *feel*

*Jesus' love and the good power of His Life-force LIFTING THEM UP INSIDE, empowering their greatest visions and understanding about the truly heavenly meaning of life.*

The early Christians recorded it this way: "And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested<sup>[a]</sup> on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:2-4) And it was these deep moments of personal-spiritual effervescence that helped these founders of Christianity to know that Jesus was much more than a prophet or great spiritual leader, but truly He had always been their "Immanuel," their "God with us" in Divine-Human form. And through the Glorified Lord came an even greater power and movement of God's forces flowing into and throughout life everywhere—a mighty Divine Wind, full of love, understanding and peace. All those who felt this greatest emergence of God's Spirit pouring forth on Pentecost felt the Lord's comforting presence, which Christ also referred to as our Divine Helper and Comforter.

The start of the Lord's First Christian Church era, which kicked into high gear when His Holy Spiritual Life-force and energy descended upon that large crowd with Peter at Pentecost, was an exciting time to be alive, but only if one had a burning faith in Jesus their Christ, knowing that He was **the power** of love and truth itself, who cures people from more than physical diseases and loss of natural life, but even more so from internal enslavement to self-centeredness.

The entire *Gospel of John* gives us the truth of what Jesus did and said while His own lifelong glorification process transpired deep in His psyche. What we find in the fourth Gospel is an **amazing story** of men and women of boldness, who felt afire with love and charity! These men and women were the outcasts at that point in history after Jesus was crucified. In fact, the story of Saul of Tarsus (who had been a Pharisee until his conversion while on a road leading northward toward Damascus) shows us how powerfully penetrating the Lord's outpouring love and truth were and still are today. Saul, later renamed as Paul, had been hunting down, persecuting and killing the early Christians, until his conversion that day, blinding him in the process and humbling him to be sure. On the face of things one would think that Christianity could have easily fizzled out of existence, and it would have had the reality of the Lord's Resurrected-Divine-Love been just a fairytale. However, the truth of God's Divine-Human Love and Wisdom expanded infinitely as His followers learned through **personal experience that Divine Love and Wisdom were here to stay**, and were more powerful than any evils and hatred that the people of earth could throw at it. As the Easter story reminds us, just *try* and kill real love, and watch it resurrect with even greater power and force several days later.

The Lord's mission was and has remained ever since then **UNSTOPPABLE**. For when the Holy Spirit infills one's heart and soul, there is but one thing that stands out in one's mind---"No matter what the cost I will be a servant of Jesus Christ and my neighbors. Let all else around me crumble, but I will serve my Lord." Or as the Apostle Paul wrote, true Christian "...love never fails. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:8a,13)

This kind of deep-down spiritual devotion to the Lord, by the way, is what the early church leaders understood gave someone the title of a "saint." The Greek meaning of this word connects to the meaning of the word we would call "different." A saint was not some rare individual within the church, but rather, *every* church member who loves the Lord and who therefore wants to be different from the worldly sort of person who doesn't care about God and spiritual values.

As William Barclay wrote: "Twice the Christians at Lydda were called saints (Ac.9:32,41). The same word is used earlier in the chapter by Ananias to describe the Christians at Jerusalem (Ac.9:13). This is the word that Paul always uses to describe the church member, for he always writes his letters to the saints that are at such and such a place. So then we who are Christians are not different from others in that we are chosen for greater honor on this earth; we are different in that we are chosen for a greater service. We are saved to serve," Professor Barclay wrote.

Truly, we're all meant for Christian sainthood, to be "different" from those who just want to skate through life, wanting to heap up as much dominance, control and riches as they can. And yet as sad as their choices are, God uses them to remind us of the enormous power God holds. It's the miracles the Lord performs deep inside the chambers of your heart, as well as in the perceptions occurring in your mind, that make life in the Christian Church something very beautiful to behold. I am a witness to this every week in the ministry of Christ within your lives and within my life also. I felt the powerfully loving and saving empowerment and influence of the Lord's Holy Spirit this past week, in fact, when someone I know personally chose to treat me disrespectfully and unkindly; but rather than wanting to respond in kind, in a "tit for tat" fashion, instead what I felt was tremendous mercy and forgiveness inside—knowing that the Lord's sole focus with everyone is to gradually change and save them.

Sometimes the way of spiritual regeneration, however, does get very hard and messy, and sometimes we can think we've really blown it one too many times. But the truth is that each day we persevere, keeping faith in our Savior one day at a time (continually advancing on obedience to God's commandments), the often silent miracle of spiritual regeneration moves along steadily. The moving, dramatic stories in the Holy Scriptures are vivid correspondential representations for us of the new life our Lord constantly brings. And so, when you're feeling spiritually sick inside, know beyond doubt that our Lord Jesus Christ can heal you. When you feel like some important part

of you has fallen down and died, Christ's love can resurrect you! Peter symbolizes the power of faith that is right now growing inside your mind. Through this apostle representing the ability of conscious faith within you, Christ's healing power comes in, and saves.

I pray that you can more and more *seriously believe* in and be centered upon the faith-power God has called into His service inside of you. Long ago it was vividly revealed on 3,000 people when the birth of Christianity happened on Pentecost, which Peter represents. I pray that every one of us stops ourselves from sinking down into our everyday "comfort zones," so that the Lord may call into action the same restorative power of Divine Love that we see and feel around us in Summertime. This is a robust spiritual Power that is joyful about being able to serve—a power that does not give up on hope. Let us celebrate this gift, the free gift of the Lord's Holy Spirit, which renews and empowers everyone around the world who loves and follows the ways of the Lord, as salvation lasting into eternity! Amen.