

# Daily Devotions

## May 29-June 3, 2023

### Monday May 29

#### **Acts 2:1-21**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." <sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

<sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. <sup>18</sup>Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup>And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. <sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the

Lord's great and glorious day. <sup>21</sup>Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

### ***For Reflection***

The Day of Pentecost isn't a well-known holiday outside the church like Christmas and Easter, but it is very important for our lives of faith. It's the day the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and turned a small band of Jesus' followers into the Church. Since the Day of Pentecost, the world has never been the same!

The Holy Spirit filled the disciples and allowed them to speak in all sorts of languages, so everyone could be swept up in the good news of what God had done in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost ushered in a transformation of the hearts and lives of the disciples and all who heard their message. God was at work doing something new—pouring out His Spirit on everyone who believed in his Son and the forgiveness of sins and eternal life he offers. As Peter said at the end of his sermon explaining why so many languages were being spoken and heard, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Everyone! Thanks be to God!

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What are some of your memories of worship on the Day of Pentecost? Have you attended a Confirmation on Pentecost? Heard lay readers reading this lesson from Acts in different languages? Enjoyed singing festive hymns in worship? The day that we celebrate the formation of the Church is an important day for Christians to come together and be the Church!
2. When Peter quotes from the prophet Joel after the Holy Spirit rushes through the crowd, he speaks of prophecies, dreams and visions. What are some of the dreams and visions you have for our congregation today? What would you like to see for the future of Reformation Lutheran Church? How is God calling you to be part of making that dream or vision a reality?
3. It's essential that we pass on faith to younger generations, and encourage them in their lives of faith today. If you haven't yet, please go to [www.oursurvey.church/rlc](http://www.oursurvey.church/rlc) to take Reformation's "Growing Young Survey." This will allow us to learn more about how our church views and engages with young people, and guide our ministry to the next generation as we follow Jesus, together.

The Growing Young Team appreciates your feedback and participation in the survey!

### **Read Psalm 68**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for victims and communities grieving from gun violence. Pray for the safety of all people, especially in schools, for reasonable laws, and for resources to combat the mental health crisis in America.

### **Tuesday May 30**

#### **Read Psalm 69-70**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for all students. Ask God to grant them learning, growth, friendships, and fun. Pray that they would increase not only in knowledge, but in wisdom and character.

### **Wednesday May 31**

#### **Psalm 104:24-34, 35b**

<sup>24</sup>O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

<sup>25</sup>Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.

<sup>26</sup>There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

<sup>27</sup>These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

<sup>28</sup>when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

<sup>29</sup>When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

<sup>30</sup>When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

<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.

<sup>35</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD!

### ***For Reflection***

This psalm echoes the themes of the Day of Pentecost by highlighting the beauty, diversity, and complexity of the world God created. Just as the disciples spoke in a multitude of languages on Pentecost, the Earth and the sea are filled with an overwhelming variety of creatures. God's care for every living thing is shown in the way that he continues to sustain everything he made. The psalm wraps up with the writer praising God, whose glory is infused in every aspect of creation. When we look at the endless beauty of God's creation, we have every reason to worship and praise him with our whole hearts and our full voices!

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Read v. 25 again, as it describes "the sea, great and wide." Are you a "Delaware beach person"? Do you experience God's presence near the sea, or are you more of a "mountain person"? Reflect on your favorite parts of God's creation. How does being in nature help you feel connected to your Heavenly Father, the Creator of the universe?
2. This psalm highlights God's generosity toward his creatures. When have you looked to God to give you "food in due season" (v. 27)? How have you relied on God's generosity to provide what you needed at various times in your life?
3. In v. 34, the psalmist prays, "may my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord." That word, "meditation," in Hebrew had to do with the act of speaking. For us in modern times, it's helpful to "meditate" on Scripture by reading it aloud and praying aloud. Choose a verse or a passage from this week's Bible readings to say aloud a few times this week. "Meditate" on God's word often, and listen to God's promises for you as you go about your days.

### **Read Psalm 71-72**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for the ministry of Reformation Lutheran Church, that we would be devoted to serving God, bearing witness to the Gospel so that others may come to believe, and serving our community so that we may bless others.

## Thursday June 1

### **1 Corinthians 12:3-13**

<sup>3</sup>Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup>and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup>and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup>To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>0</sup>to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

<sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

<sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

### ***For Reflection***

In the New Testament, “ministry” isn’t something done by pastors. Pastors have essential roles of teaching, leading worship, and shepherding, but *ministry*, the work of sharing the faith, building up the church, tending to souls, and serving the needy, is done by all Christians. They understood that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to every believer in Jesus to empower them to do the work of the Kingdom.

The Corinthian Christians had come to focus too much on what they saw as the relative importance of spiritual gifts: who had the gifts to do what. They saw gifts for ministry as indicators of personal value and status in the community. Paul wants to correct them here. Gifts for ministry, which are given to all Christians, don’t bring glory to the individual. They bring glory to God, who creates and gives the gifts. The Corinthians were so concerned with *who* had *what* gifts, they failed to realize *why* the gifts had been given.

The Holy Spirit elevates us beyond self-centered questions of status and importance. When you trust the Spirit, you are brought into the mission of Jesus. Your gifts are not for your own benefit, but “for the common good.” You are given a new purpose, to serve the Lord who has created, called, and empowered you. You are made part of something greater than yourself: you a part of the Body of Christ, united with Jesus and fellow Christians, with the very life of God poured out into you! This is how much you are valued by God, and this is what gives you a divine, holy status. How will you live out this calling?

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. This reading focuses more on supernatural spiritual gifts, but not every spiritual gift is “supernatural.” What gifts do you see in your life that God has given you? If you’re not sure, ask others what they see. How can you use those gifts “for the common good” of God’s mission?
2. We are tempted to look at church and faith for “what we get from them.” This is the pervasive “consumerist” mentality of our culture. But Paul here challenges us to see what God has given us so that we can offer it to the work of Christ. What would it mean for you to focus more on what God empowers you to do for others through church than on what church does for you?

### **Read Psalm 73-74**

**Today’s Prayer Focus:** Pray for the spiritual growth of yourself and all our members, that we would be filled with the Holy Spirit, increase in our knowledge of God’s will, and overflow in love for each other and the world around us.

## **Friday June 2**

### **John 20:19-23**

<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

<sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

“Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

### ***For Reflection***

Of all the ways the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to bring the grace of God to others, the authority to forgive sins in the name of God is the highest. The greatest power that the Church has is to proclaim what God has done in the death and resurrection of Christ and tell people, “because of the love of Jesus, your sins are forgiven.” This kind of talk is what the Holy Spirit creates in us. Christians are called to serve God and bless our neighbors in many concrete ways. The Holy Spirit gives us many gifts for ministry. But the heart, the source of it all is the beautiful truth that sins are freely forgiven. This is true for you: your sins are washed away by the love of Jesus! And it is what we must share with the world. All Christian service to others flows out of our freedom from sin. All acts of Christian love and witness find their power in the new life of grace that comes from forgiveness.

There is a danger, though. The Church can lose its nerve. Jesus gives us the unconditional grace to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, to actually do the forgiving in the name of Christ. But if we don’t act on this authority, we leave others bound in their sins. This can happen when we fail to name sin in the first place; sin that is overlooked is not forgiven. It can also happen when we forget our mission to forgive and instead think that our job is to moralize or enforce standards of behavior. Christianity does have a moral component! But the morality of following Jesus makes no sense to someone who has not experienced the grace of forgiveness. If we want to see people walking in the freedom and holiness of the Holy Spirit’s power, we don’t need to announce more rules (even if those rules are morally true), as that will leave sins retained. We need to proclaim forgiveness to break the power of sin. This is what creates new, holy life. If we abandon the mission of forgiving sins, we only leave people bound.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. When has the forgiveness of sins felt especially real or powerful to you?
2. If the antidote to sin isn’t more rules, but forgiveness, how does that impact the way you deal with sinful behavior from others?

**Read Psalm 75-77**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for peace in the world, especially in Ukraine. Ask God to sustain those who suffer under persecution for the name of Christ. Pray that all people would have freedom and good government.

**Saturday June 3**

**Read Psalm 78**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for police, fire fighters, all emergency workers, health care workers, and those who serve in the military. Pray for farmers and those who transport food. Ask God to grant well-being to all in our community, and to stir up generosity to meet the needs of those who lack food, shelter, or other needs.

**The Mission of Reformation Lutheran Church is to:**

**Invite** our neighbors as Jesus invites us.

**Engage** in a community of graceful discipleship.

**Equip** our members to grow in faith and ministry.

**Embody** the love of Jesus in our world.