

Gods great deeds in times of crises
Sermon on Pentecost
Acts 2, 1-21



1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-

fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." 14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 " 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

The first social visit after the opening up of lock down (because of the corona pandemic) made it clear to me how much Corona has changed us. We were again with close friends. But we could neither hug nor even shake one another's hands.. At the coffee table we sat opposite each other, observing the prescribed social distance. The friendship was still there. But something had changed. Everything was no longer the same as before. And that we can also say in so many other situations. In the supermarket, the mask and glass pane separate us from the employees. In the Christian service we sing with a mask and even the Holy Communion can only be celebrated under very special conditions. Dear ones! our lives have changed a lot in the past few months. And today on Pentecost Sunday I want to ask the question: if God wants to tell us something about all of this. I know some people seem to know exactly that Corona is a punishment from God. Others know just as exactly

that Corona can never be a punishment from God. If you ask me, I don't know. But what I do know is that God does care about us humans. And God did not create the world only to leave it to its own devices. We learn from the Bible that God intervenes in human history. God is the master of history. God is certainly not the great dictator who spreads disease and war all over the world just as he pleases. But he directs the events in the here and now. And we learn from the Bible that the great catastrophes were always times when God's spirit was at work and made people believe. For example, we see the refugee Josef who was thrown into a well and then sold to the Egyptians. God used his situation as a great opportunity and a new beginning. Likewise, Moses was first startled out of his sandals when he saw the burning bush in front of him. And yet that was exactly the moment when he was allowed to get to know the living God. Israel also had to go through a long hike through the desert before being allowed to enter the promised land. The Pentecost narrative is also one of the great catastrophe stories in the Bible. The bloody death of our Lord on the cross was fresh in the minds of the disciples. But then the same Jesus surprised the disciples out of their wits when he rose from the dead. After many apparitions, the disciples finally understood: Jesus lives and He has finally defeated Satan and death with his death and resurrection. And then the disciples were startled again by their Lord simply going to heaven and sentencing them to their own home office in Jerusalem. What kind of challenge was that? Knowing that Jesus won and after all the experiences with their Lord, they still new that they were on ground zero. That certain something was still missing. I imagine how impatient Peter must have been. On the one hand the great commission on the other hand his very own personal weakness. The courage and strength to carry the gospel to the world was very far from them. They knew what to do and still lacked the strength. That must have been a terrible agony. And then the little hut where these disciples were allowed to hide really started taking the appearance of a horror movie. A loud roar from the sky shook the house and then there were flames of fire on the heads of the disciples. Something like that would be enough to upset everyone. And that was exactly the moment that the Holy Spirit chose to come into the world. That was exactly when the Church was born. The great times of God are when people are at the end and their tether and no longer know what to do. There is a basic truth in this. The way of God with us humans is not a development of human beings towards ever higher and higher divine goals. One cannot acquire, learn or train the Holy Spirit either. Pentecost is very different! When the Holy Spirit came, God and only God was at work. Because one thing is brought to our attention through Pentecost. Namely, that the Holy Spirit is suddenly there without any action and without human participation. And that's the miracle of Pentecost! Of course, such a miracle can never be produced or imitated by us. Sometimes this is a big challenge for us. Especially in times of crisis and in times when you cannot see God and his work at all, it is a great challenge for us. We are experiencing such a time again. We are not only experiencing this crisis with those who no longer believe in God, but we are experiencing the crisis right in the middle of ourselves and in the Church. In us too! We are now really facing insoluble problems. Our mission is to celebrate services with Holy Communion. And that is exactly what we cannot do now because it would endanger the weakest among us. And how long can our church last like this? How long can we stay in faith? Even before Corona, we were at a loss at so many points. We talked and talked and talked... And the hearts just remained unmoved. We have become illiterate in reading the Bible and that is why we are also illiterate in talking about God. Above all, we have become illiterate when it comes to talking to God. No wonder then that the crises within the church is spreading. We are desperately looking for any levers or tricks that would make us more alive. In the worst case, we even try to fake the effects of the Holy Spirit. It is precisely for this reason that we should keep the Pentecost story in mind and ask ourselves the question: What did the disciples do so that the Holy Spirit came? Nothing! They just had to wait. Because without the Holy Spirit there is no faith and there is no church. And if we have great concerns about the Church again today. Also, if we want to despair in the faith of the Church, there is only one thing we can do: to pray for the Holy Spirit. Almost all Pentecost songs we know do the same. Just as

Pentecost is a miracle, so the effects of the Holy Spirit are miracles every time. We cannot convince anyone of the faith. This is not possible! Just as we cannot produce belief in our own hearts, we cannot produce this in other people. Faith does not work without the Holy Spirit. That is why we need the Pentecostal miracle not just once, but again and again. Today we need the Pentecost miracle among us again.

We need this especially in times of the Corona. We cannot know exactly what God is going to do with us during this time. But we do know one thing. We can still do what the disciples did at Pentecost. And what did they do? They talked to people and explained everything to them. The Holy Spirit did not leave people in the dark at that time. He doesn't leave us in the dark either. The first effect of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was that the disciples were allowed to explain to everyone in their own language what had happened here. And then Peter got up and clearly explained everything from the beginning of God's history to the present. It also included that he confronted people with the shocking fact of what they had done: "You dragged Jesus on the cross and had him killed" This word should not be kept secret. Because sin had to be exposed and no longer allowed to be swept under the carpet. Only then did the word hit people deep in the heart. The ground was torn from their feet That's right. But then the way was cleared so that the Holy Spirit could do his work. Jesus, whom they had murdered and whom they believed to be finally defeated, came forward and knocked on the door of the heart. And so the Holy Spirit must work in us again and again. With clear and sober Words. He tells us where we had broken the 10 commandments. He shows us where our life has become impure. He shows us where and when we went wrong. Even if he has to do it through many detours. Such moments are truly terrible moments that shake our whole lives to the ground. And yet they are healing moments that set the world in motion. It was like that back then in Jerusalem. What started as a roar from heaven and started as a fire on the heads of the disciples was spoken in clear, language so that everyone understood. This language hit the hearts. And it was the faith that arose in these hearts that could break through the walls of darkness and death. Faith then ran like fire among the people. The Holy Spirit broke the walls in the heart, but also the walls between peoples. From the Acts of the Apostles the many peoples who were there at that time and were taken hold of by the Holy Spirit were added up. Anyone who had been gripped by the love of the Holy Spirit knows no boundaries. Once you understand that it is about people being saved by God, you no longer care that the many new people have completely different languages and habits than we are used to. Once you have understood that the Holy Spirit loves his people, you can see that what happened in me happens exactly in the same manner in the other. I want to pray for such a miracle! We need Pentecost. And so we stand before Him again today and open our hearts. We see with clear eyes and only too clearly that the ground has been torn from under our feet. Come Holy Spirit! We stand there in front of him like a car that runs without fuel. We know what to do and still lack the strength. And yet we know where we can fill up completely freely and without any conditions. Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit. Let the miracle happen among us! Let it be Pentecost! Amen.