

Sunday 5th June 2022
Glynde Lutheran Church
Sermon on Acts 2:1-4, 38 (Pentecost)
Theme: “Birthdays are special, and worth celebrating!”
“Always remember your church birthday!”

Introduction:

I want to talk to you briefly this morning about birthdays. *Today is Pentecost day, the day on which we celebrate the Church’s birthday*, and so I think today a ‘pretty’ good day on which to talk to you about birthdays....

Part 1: Your biological birthday

Birthdays are worth celebrating, don’t you think? Certainly, your and my *biological* birthday is! Who’s had a birthday recently? What did you do to celebrate it? Did you have a birthday party? Did you have a birthday cake? Did you get presents?

Did you look at photos of yourself when you were younger, and even photos of yourself you were a baby, and from when you were born?

Birthdays are special, because on your birthday you can stop for a while and remember how old you are, and you can have a day remembering what God has done for you in your life, a day on which you can give thanks to God for your life. I wonder, *amidst all the excitement of your birthday*, do you stop and give thanks to God for your birthday?

Birthdays, too, are an opportunity to stop for a while and think about the future: about the fact that you and I are getting older. None of us are as young as we used to be! Birthdays remind us where we are headed: that we are headed to old age and death. As Jesus pointed out again and again, we need to well prepared for dying (*e.g., Matt. 24:36-44*). And we are well prepared for this, if we are trusting in Jesus as our Saviour!

Part 2: The Church’s birthday

We’re talking about birthdays today, because today is often called “the birthday of the Church”? Why is Pentecost day often called the Church’s birthday? ...Because this is the day that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his followers, as he promised he would (*John 15:26; Acts 1:4, 8*).

This is the day that the followers of Jesus received God’s power to live as God’s children, the power to make a difference in this world for God. This is the day that the Christian Church in a very real sense started!

Listen again to what Luke tells us happened on Pentecost day:

When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place, probably Mark’s house in Jerusalem. Suddenly there was a noise

from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak (*Acts 2:1-4*).

It was very apparent that something remarkable had happened: the followers of Jesus gathered in Mark's house in Jerusalem heard a sound like a strong wind blowing and they saw what looked like tongues of fire settling on each of them. And to top it off, they were all enabled to speak in other languages.... It was clear to those gathered in the house that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, had come upon them as Jesus had promised he would!

And then the Holy Spirit in Peter empowered Peter to stand up before the crowds of people in Jerusalem for the Festival of Pentecost, and to proclaim to them about Jesus, *and all that God had done for us through Jesus, God's Son*.

Peter finished off his message to the crowd by saying:

“Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit” (*Acts 2:38*).

Part 3: Your Church birthday

Which brings us to your Church birthday?

When did you and I first begin our life as God's child? When we were baptised!! When you and I were baptised, we received God's forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit came to live in us (*cf. Acts 2:38*).

The Holy Spirit came to live in the first followers of Jesus, *about one hundred and twenty of them*, on the Day of Pentecost. And the Holy Spirit came to live in each of us when we were baptised! That's the day, you and I were “reborn” as God's children!! (*John 3:1-8; cf. 1:12,13*).

So, your Church birthday, *your baptismal birthday*, is a ‘pretty’ special day, to say the least! It's a day well worth celebrating and remembering!

It's the day on which your whole life was completely changed!

- 1) This is the day that your sins were “washed away” (*Acts 22:16; cf. 2:38*), the day on which your life as God's forgiven child started! And you have continued to receive God's ongoing forgiveness as you trusted in Jesus as your Saviour (*Rom. 3:28; 8:1*).

Imagine what your life would be like if you hadn't been baptised into God's family!?

Instead of living your life with peace of mind, because you know that Jesus has

suffered and died for all your sins, you would be living your life burdened down with guilt, and shame, and fear.

- 2) Furthermore, it's the day that God's Spirit came to live in you, *the day that God Himself came to live in you!!* (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:13). God's Spirit in you enables you to go on trusting in Jesus as your Saviour (1 Cor. 12:3). And He empowers you to live as God's child! God's Spirit in you empowers you to be more and more like Jesus, and bear the fruit of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self control" (Gal. 5:22-23; cf. Rom. 8:29).

Furthermore, the Spirit of God in you is the first fruits and the guarantee of all that God has in store for you in the future, *of life after death, of eternal life with God in His new Kingdom, of a new totally Spirit filled body, and so on.*

Listen to what Paul says about this:

- * **But it is not just creation itself which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his sons and set our whole being free** (Rom. 8:23).
- * **You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised. The Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance** (*no more than that, the Greek word used here in the original means the down payment, the first instalment, the pledge of what is to come*), **the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people** (Eph. 1:13-14).

So your Church birthday, *your baptismal birthday*, is a day well worth celebrating, *to say the least!* Imagine what your life would be like if God's Spirit didn't live in you, *if you hadn't been baptised!?* (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). You would be a lost person: apart from God, living for yourself, and having your life controlled by your "human nature" which Paul says shows itself in all sorts of indecent and self-centred ways (cf. Gal. 5:19-21).

So can I ask you, "Do you celebrate your Church birthday, *your baptismal birthday?*" For a start, do you know what day your Church birthday is on, *your baptismal birthday*, is on? Mine's on September 27th (*hold up certificate*). Do you think that we should celebrate this day at home? We do it here in church with our baptismal anniversaries, *and in fact we are going to do that next week for people baptised in the months of April to June*, but should we do it at home? I think so!

What sorts of things do you think we could do to remember our Church birthday?

- * **Put your Church birthday on your calendar or in your diary**
- * **Light your baptismal candle on that day**
- * **Sing "It's your birthday" or "Happy birthday"**
- * **Have a baptismal birthday cake at home, and talk about your baptism and**

what it means to you.

- * **Look at your baptism certificate, and photos of your baptism**

Conclusion:

We've been talking about birthdays, because today is Pentecost Day, the day on which we remember the birthday of the Church, *the day that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his followers as He promised, the day on which the Christian church in a very real sense began.*

Birthdays are special and worth celebrating!

The day on which we are born is special and worth celebrating. So is today, Pentecost Day, the birthday of the Church. But I think that the most important birthday for us to remember and celebrate is our baptism, our church birthday, the day on which you and I were "reborn" as God's child, *the day on which we received God's forgiveness, the day on which God's Spirit came to live in us.*

May your and my baptism day always be a special day for us!!

Addenda:

- * **"Then he, *Ananias*, said: 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. ¹⁵ You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.' (Acts 22:14-16 NIV).**
- * **Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. ¹³ In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body *with* the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink (1 Cor. 12:12-13)**