

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 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. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Pentecost is a sacred occasion, an opportunity for spiritual renewal, nurture, and growth. Pentecost during the Old Testament was a festival called the Feast of Weeks that began fifty days after the beginning of Passover. It was an agricultural festival celebrating thanks for the first fruits of the spring harvest. However, this all changed after the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. From then on the festival focused exclusively on the Torah – the Law given on Mount Sinai. The word *Pentecost* means 50th and occurs 50 days following Easter Sunday. On the Christian calendar this would be on the 7th Sunday after Easter. Since Easter is a movable holiday then Pentecost is also moveable and can occur anytime between May 10 and June 13.

The New Testament Pentecost represents God's gift of the Holy Spirit that helps people spread the gospel. People are God's witness to the world. The liturgical color is red which symbolizes the fire of Pentecost. Traditionally red is only used on this one Sunday of Pentecost. However, some churches will use red for other Sundays. Pentecost Sunday is a time of revival, renewal of purpose, mission, and calling for God's ongoing work in the world. Pentecost helps to restore community that is disrupted by sin and selfish ambition to a unity of purpose. The focus is on the church's mission to the world. God's work is a movement that takes place through the Holy Spirit to empower the church for its mission. Our responsibility is to continue the mission. We can't save the world but we can make a difference in the lives that we touch. That is where you shine as a church.

Pentecost is very significant for the church because it is on the day of Pentecost that the church was born. For the 1st time all the people gathered together and assembled as the church. Suddenly they were gifted with new vitality and the followers of Jesus loudly praised God. Luke placed emphasis on Peter's speech. Peter boldly proclaims that what they are experiencing is the prophecy of Joel that stated that God would send the Holy Spirit on the people. The post resurrected Jesus sent the Spirit to descend upon them. This same spirit descends upon all of the people that are baptized in the name of Jesus. The new community quickly grew in sufficient numbers to draw attention. The religious leaders and the political authorities had to deal with a renewed group of the followers of Jesus that grew in spite of killing Jesus. From its inception the church is a missionary organization where the members become filled with the Holy Spirit.

I hear many stories of churches that are struggling during the pandemic. Membership attendance and participation slides downward, they experience financial troubles, and conflict is on the rise. However, you have held strong. As a church you are a thriving ministry. Artificial happiness comes from chasing pleasure. Whereas, thriving experiences are peace, contentment, joy, and love. You cannot manufacture these good feelings. One significant thing that allows you to thrive is resilience, your ability to adjust to changes in world. Resilience allows you to thrive when you keep growing toward your potential. The pandemic upset a lot of people and upset the lives of many ministries. But you have been able to shine and strengthen in various aspects of ministry. Another key component of a thriving is authenticity. You have held true to doctrine.

Your identity is focused on Jesus not commercialism or institutionalism. By staying true to the gospel your identity is one body that is true to the word.

You are a thriving ministry. You are not struggling or coping but thriving. You know what you believe, you know why you believe it, and you live according to your belief structure. Your core values are the pursuit of truth and wisdom. You serve the well being of others, enrich the lives of others, and make the world a better place. When you have a meaningful system that you live by, it is a predictor of your health, success in ministry, and longevity. It allows you the opportunity to dedicate your life to what we know is important. When you live a life that is focused on what is important, you are thriving, and you are making difference in the world. You don't start off thriving. Thriving is the result of many positive things that grows from being built on the right foundation. Pentecost sets up the right foundation for the church to thrive. However, churches get distracted by the challenges of daily living. But you have held true to the gospel and that has allowed you to thrive during the past, now during this pandemic, and onward into the future.