

Pentecost Mission Harvest Leviticus 23:15- 22 Acts 2:1-12

The day the church was baptized with the Holy Spirit it seemed like Jerusalem was a mini Los Angeles. People from all over the world were in the city. When you walked down town you heard people speaking Greek, and Spanish, and Egyptian, and Chinese and Korean, and Arab, and even some Afrikans. They sounded and looked so different these foreigners. Most of the people who lived in Jerusalem thought it was a big pain, but the local businessmen loved it. These foreigners booked up the hotels, filled the restaurants, and emptied the shelves in their stores. It was a million dollar boost to the economy. It was like super bowl Sunday in the same city every year.

Why were all these people in Jerusalem? The bible told them to come. Three times a year God commanded his people to come to Jerusalem to worship and to celebrate the great things God had done. These god-fearing people from all over the world were in Jerusalem to celebrate Shavous, the festival of Weeks.

Walking with God and living in his presence and enjoying all his blessings and seeing God's glory was experienced by living in God's agenda. That is the teaching of the bible. By living in God's system of shaping life. And living in God's agenda was done by coming to Jerusalem three times a year and celebrating the seven God feasts that God commanded on Mt Sinai. Living in God's agenda was done by participating in the worship of the festivals.

Each year started with a time of preparation for Passover in the first month. All the people were called to come to Jerusalem. Passover Week was the greatest of the High Holy Day festivals. Everything in Jewish life was connected to celebrating God saving them from slavery and remembering the Exodus on Passover night. Their existence depended on it. At the end of that week of unleavened Bread, on the Boxing Day of Passover Sabbath, the Monday after, they went home waving the sheaves of first fruits. This was the third feast of that week long retreat. To the Old Testament people this Feast of first fruits was a minor festival, an afterthought event which for Christians became the biggest.

You see Passover became our Good Friday and the Feast of First fruits became our Easter. Jesus, on resurrection Day became the first fruits of God's new creation harvest. Jesus was raised up from the earth like a planted seed bearing much fruit on the day of First Fruits.

Now in Leviticus 23:15 God tells his people that from that First Fruits celebration, from that Easter Celebration they were to count off seven full weeks, 50 days. That is again on the Jewish Monday, and on that Day all the people were again commanded to come to Jerusalem and to worship and fellowship with God. On this Big High Holy Day

Festival, Shavous, the feast of Weeks the people were commanded to gather at the temple or the tent of meeting. All the pleasing aroma offerings were made, the communion offerings and the communion meals were shared. Bread and wine was shared. The seven lambs reminded them of the Passover. The two Lambs waved before the Lord reminded them of the Day of Atonement to come. And instead of eating unleavened bread, the bread of suffering, they ate bread made with yeast. Fluffy raised bread, the bread of joy. It was one of the most elaborate and comprehensive and joyfilled worship events of the year.

Shavous, the festival of Weeks, the Greeks called it Pentecost, the feast of 50 Days. This feast happened at the same time that the Wheat harvest was to begin. This was the second harvest festival. Jesus was raised on the beginning of the first harvest, the barley harvest. Pentecost was the feast of the second harvest, and the bread and the first fruits used at Shavous on Pentecost was the new grain offering of the wheat or second harvest.

At that feast God reminded the people that the harvest, especially that second harvest the harvest of wheat was not just to them. Not just for the people in Israel. When you harvest especially this second harvest God said in verse 22, “do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigners residing among you.

And so Pentecost since the very beginning was a Feast with a focus on the people of the world, on the poor and the foreigner. And so in Old Testament times and even today Jewish people read the book of Ruth, because through this second Harvest Feast God will do even greater things like what happened to Ruth and to the apostles.

Shavous, the feast of Weeks was also the feast that commemorated God coming down on the Mt Sinai to speak to the people and give them the 10 commandments. On the first Pentecost the God of Heaven and earth came down to speak to the people. It was so terrifying that the people told God to stop and find another way to communicate with them. And to make the long story short God sent Jesus his son, as a gentle servant, a non scary voice to communicate his grace and his truth to us.

The Jewish people even today celebrate Shavous, the festival of weeks, Pentecost to remember the gift to the 10 commandments – the gift of the word of God - and the translation of that Word into the 70 languages of the world.

It was on this Pentecost festival, this feast of Weeks, Shavous, that God baptize his people with the Holy Spirit. That is why so many foreign people were in Jerusalem. They were there to receive the fruit and gleanings of the second harvest. To eat and drink of the second first fruits namely the Holy Spirit. They were the foreigners who would take the blessing of God into the sixteen directions of the earth.

And so on Pentecost all the members of the church of Jesus, all 120 of them, were together in one place celebrating Shavous. And suddenly like the Mt Sinai visitation, God came down in wind and fire. And God filled each one of those gathered with the Holy Spirit. Each member of the church was given a manifestation of God himself. God was poured out, God was parceled out among them. The spirit of God filled them with grace and truth and the very word of God.

And when these spirit filled people spoke those foreigners from the nations of the world heard about the wonders of God's love and the wonders of God Glory in their own tongues and in the symbols of their own cultures. They were amazed and perplexed. And when they asked those spirit filled people what this was all about, they told them it was the Spirit of God manifesting among them and they too could be part of it. They too could be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And on that day 3000 accepted that cross cultural multi lingual gospel of Jesus. Jesus fulfilled all seven feasts design to live a god shaped life, a life of walking with God, and seeing his glory and experiencing his grace.

Today we live in Los Angeles a city filled with people from around the world. A city filled with people who do not know the love of God. People who are lost, and confused, and hoping for some kind of blessing from God. As we celebrate Shavous, the second Harvest made possible through the baptism of the Holy Spirit we too are filled with the Holy Spirit. Each one of us is given, what Paul Says in 1 Corinthians 12 a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. A small parceling of God's character and power. Each one of us is given some type of god inspired gift for the purpose of touching the lives of the poor and the foreigner among us - living in the neighborhoods of Los Angeles where we live and work and go to school.

And Jesus calls us to be his witnesses, to speak the gospel to our neighbors as the Spirit enables us so that people will know that God raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to the right hand of God to pour out his spirit on all those who receive as Lord and Messiah and call on his name.

Jesus and the Spirit call us to live in such god shape life that we together and as one body, by adding our gifts together for the one purpose attract daily those who are being saved. On that Historic Festival of Weeks we call Pentecost 3000 were added to their number. 3000 foreigners and poor and lost neighbors were added to the family of God.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit they became a mission community. They devoted themselves to the teachings of Jesus and celebrating his life, they devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and they devoted themselves to prayer. And because of that devotion they were in awe of what God was doing among them. They had everything in common. Everyday they met together and broke bread together in their homes.

Everyday they were in the temple enjoying the feasts of God's presence and his power. And daily they kept speaking in the way and cultures that the spirit enabled them. And daily the LORD added to their number those who were being saved.

So what about us? Are we using our gifts? Is the Spirit enabling us to communicate the gospel of Jesus love to our neighbors? Is the Lord adding to our number those who are being saved.

Pentecost is a harvest feast. Can you imagine our congregation if the Lord added only 50 to our number? What would it take? What gifts were parceled out to you? What is the spirit enabling you to do to make this happen?