

Pentecost
May 27, 2012
Text: Ezekiel 37:1-14
Theme: "Welcome to the 8th Day!"

The number seven is a big deal to God. There were six days of creation with the Sabbath being the seventh day. After six days of working, God rested and enjoyed his creation. We are encouraged to do likewise in the 3rd Commandment. Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. Sabbath means rest. Work for six days and spend the seventh day being with God and enjoying the miracle of his creation. Rest is not just in the sense of sleeping but in the sense of sitting with God, gathering with your family in Christ, receiving his sacrament, hearing his word and knowing that all things are in his hands.

It is no surprise that there are seven weeks of Easter. God was making a point when the resurrection was on the first day instead of the Sabbath. Nothing he does is by chance. Everything has meaning. It is our task to figure it out.

Every Sunday is a celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The season of Easter is a week of Sundays and the next Sunday after 7 weeks of Easter is Pentecost which is the beginning of a whole new era. Easter Sunday is the 8th day of the week. Pentecost is the 8th day after the season of Easter. For most Christians Pentecost is a rather obscure day.

There are some Christians who get excited about it, but often for the wrong reason. Horace Hummel, who wrote The Word Becoming Flesh, says they swallow the Holy Spirit feathers and all. They focus all their attention on the coming of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Everyone takes spiritual gift inventories and finds out how they are supposed to be serving God. It is not THAT the Spirit comes that is important but to understand WHEN the Spirit comes. That is important. The Holy Spirit has always been here since before the dawn of creation. But his special entrance on the 8th day is significant.

Jesus rose on the first day of the week – the eighth day – a brand new thing that had never been done before. Pentecost falls on the 1st day of the eighth week thus inaugurating the 8th day, the day of the Church, a day in which we still live.

Welcome to the 8th day! It is the day of the Church. It is certainly important that the Holy Spirit came to be with us. We need him to survive this great and terrible day. Now is the 8th day. It is the day of the Resurrection from the dead. Our Lord has ascended into Heaven, leaving us to carry out his Great Commission while he is waiting to return for us. Today is a day in which the Church is attacked with all the vengeance of Hell. Why? Because Satan knows that he has been undone. God has won the battle for all eternity.

Satan cannot stand against the whole Heavenly Host. He must retreat but he will take all the prisoners he can on his way back into the depths of Hell where soon he will be sealed for all eternity.

Welcome to the 8th day! Ezekiel saw the vision. The people of God were just dry bones – destroyed by the enemy, led into sin, helpless and harassed sheep without a shepherd withering away into nothing with no food and no water, lost in the desert. And then the 8th day dawned. The Shepherd arose and fed his sheep with his own body and blood, pouring the waters of eternal life over their heads and restoring them – resurrecting them, leading them to green pastures and still waters. And at the end of today, at the end of the 8th day, Hell will be sealed and we will live forever as God’s holy people.

Pentecost is not just about the Holy Spirit bringing his gifts to God’s people. It is about the resurrection of the dead. Christian Pentecost is modeled after the festival in the Old Testament. Fifty days after Passover, God’s people celebrated the out-pouring of God’s gifts of harvest. They were celebrating God’s provision for them. There would be food to eat for the year. We, however, celebrate the outpouring of God’s gift of life through the cross.

I have told you of my favorite memories of working on the cookie truck with my Uncle Elbert in the mountains of North

Carolina. My favorite part was the end of the day, not just because the work was over but because Uncle Elbert knew how to relax. He knew how to just sit on the front porch, and rock and wave and not think about anything. Somehow he knew how to be restored in the midst of long, hard work.

This is a long hard day in which we are living but at the end of today, all evil is reversed. All the dead are raised and all those who died in faith receive eternal life. It is a long hard day but today we are restored and at the end of this 8th day, we will be permanently restored. We will be returned to the Garden of Eden, the Promised Land, our real home, our permanent home at the end of today.

Welcome to the 8th day. God surrounds us with his angels and fills us with his Spirit through the Baptismal waters, his Holy Word and the body and blood of his own son and strengthen us for the last push of this pilgrimage to our true home.