

# SERMON – 11/11/07

## *Christianity's Family Tree – Pentecostalism*

Growing up in Arizona, my favorite relative to spend time with was my Aunt Sherry.

- My mother's youngest sister, Aunt Sherry was single, had been an athlete, and was a lot of fun to be around!
  - She was the one who took me to see the original STAR WARS movie (you know, “Episode 4” for the younger generation!)
  - My childhood memories of time spent with my aunt could be described by the words: spontaneous, spirited, vibrant & fun!
- I'm guessing that many of you have (or had) an “Aunt Sherry” in your family tree...
  - Someone who you really enjoyed spending time with...
  - Someone who lived life with passion, creativity & flair...
  - Someone who was simply fun to be around.
- Well, some people might say the very same thing for the group of Christians we'll be talking about today – Pentecostals!
  - Welcome to the 7<sup>th</sup> of 8 weeks in our ongoing series entitled, “CHRISTIANITY'S FAMILY TREE – What Other Christians Believe & Why”
  - We began with the Orthodox Church... then looked at our Roman Catholic brothers & sisters... entered the Protestant Reformation with the Lutherans & Presbyterians... encountered the Anglicans in England... and the Baptists who formed in reaction to them.
  - Next week we'll finish our series by examining the Methodists...
  - But this week, we get to learn about the Pentecostal branch of our Family tree!
  - I owe much to Rev. Adam Hamilton, pastor of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leewood, Kansas... and the study guide he's put together on this same subject.

Pentecostalism is the youngest of the major bodies of Christianity...

- Pentecostalism takes its name from the Jewish festival of **Pentecost**...

- It was this festival around AD30 that the Holy Spirit descended on the first Christians, and the church was born.
- Although the official beginning of Pentecostalism is usually set at 1901... its roots reach back another 200 years through John Wesley and the Methodist Church.
- So although we'll get a more detailed look next week at Methodism, it's important that we touch on it this week as we set the stage for the rise of Pentecostalism.
- In the early 1700's, the Church of England seemed to many to be tied more to the intellect than to the heart.
  - There was little emphasis on holiness, and many seemed satisfied with a "lukewarm" faith.
  - John Wesley & his brother Charles, both Anglican priests, began to seek more...
  - They pursued rigorous spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, & works of piety and met with others in small groups for accountability and growth.
  - In 1738, both Wesley brothers had powerful renewal experiences in their lives.
  - As a result, they incorporated into their beliefs the need for conversion & the continuing **work of the Holy Spirit** in the life of the believer...
  - They began to speak about "sanctification" or God's work in us to make us more and more holy.
  - John Wesley went on to be a leader of the great 18<sup>th</sup>-century religious revival in England.
- Wesley's followers, called Methodists, were known for their spiritual passion & for religious experiences that were sometimes deemed (by more traditional Anglicans) to be "excessive."
  - Wesley & his followers seemed able to hold together, sometimes in tension with one another, the intellect & the passions, the evangelical & the social gospels.
  - During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a number of groups broke away from the Methodist movement to form their own churches, nearly all emphasizing holiness or sanctification.

- They included the Nazarenes and their predecessors, the Church of God... the Adventists... the Salvation Army... the Wesleyan Church... and others.
- These groups tended to be more conservative theologically than the Methodists, and they placed a greater emphasis on both personal piety and personal fervor or experience.
- Pentecostalism was born out of this holiness movement in 1901 at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas.
  - Charles Fox Parham, who had a Methodist background, was teaching at Bethel.
  - His study of the book of Acts led him to wonder if the works of the Holy Spirit recorded there could not still happen in the church.
  - Parham came to believe that what he called “baptism in the Holy Spirit” was separate from the believer’s receipt of the Holy Spirit at salvation.
  - He felt that such an experience – an immersion of the Holy Spirit – would be demonstrated first by speaking in tongues, whereby the Holy Spirit enabled Christians to speak in a language they had not previously known or to speak in a completely unintelligible language.
  - His class began to pray for such an experience...
  - A woman named Agnes Ozman was the first one to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as she started speaking in an unintelligible language!
  - Within a short time thereafter, most of the class also received this blessing.
  - Parham went around the country telling people about this, and encouraging them to pray for a similar experience.
  - When he was in Los Angeles, meeting in an abandoned Methodist Church on Azusa Street, believers experienced a powerful move of the Holy Spirit.
  - Newspapers publicized it... more people came to see what it was all about... and soon, even miracles began to break out in this revival community!
- Modern-day Pentecostals still view the experience of speaking in tongues as normative for the church!

- Those in non-Pentecostal denominations who have had the Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit are typically called “Charismatics,” from the Greek word used in the NT for spiritual gifts (*charismata*)...
- Today it is estimated that there are as many as 600 million Christians worldwide who are either Pentecostal or Charismatic.
- We have seen that most Christian denominations claim to preserve the earliest traditions of the church...some by way of continuity, others by a return to it.
  - Baptists, we saw, view church history in this way...
  - Pentecostals would say that Baptists have not gone back far enough to reclaim the practices of the NT sufficiently... for they have missed the powerful experience of the apostolic church – the baptism of the Holy Spirit!
  - As a result, this is how Pentecostals might view church history & their role in it...

Now there are many different Pentecostal churches around the world... but there are 4 basic emphases that just about all Pentecostals would adhere to:

**1. Baptism of the Holy Spirit...**

- Most Christians believe the Holy Spirit comes to all of us at our baptism or confirmation.
- Pentecostals would agree... but they also believe there’s a subsequent experience (a “2<sup>nd</sup> work of grace”) at which time the Holy Spirit completely immerses believers, filling them with power.
- Pentecostals have an openness to and a desire for that indwelling!
- Speaking in tongues is just one of the manifestations of this powerful experience.

**2. A Personal Relationship with Christ...**

- While Pentecostals believe that it’s necessary for a believer to accept Christ as Savior & Lord... what is pivotal is having a personal relationship with Christ.
- It’s not enough to know about God... and even intellectually agree with God. One must have an intimate relationship with God, as well!
- Pentecostals place a strong emphasis on the emotional dimensions of one’s relationship with Jesus.

### 3. **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ...**

- Christians over the centuries have believed that Jesus will come again in final victory... but it has largely been spiritualized... seen as something in the distant future.
- The Pentecostal movement began expecting Jesus to come back soon!
- Most Pentecostal pastors will not predict dates for the Lord's return (the book of Acts states that no one will know the day or time!)... but for many years it was believed that the Lord would return in 1988 – 40 years after the restoration of the nation of Israel.
- There is a sense among many in the Pentecostal movement that the return of Jesus will be within the lifetime of most of us living today.

### 4. **Modern-day Miracles & Healing...**

- Oral Roberts was one of the best-known ambassadors for Pentecostalism until 1968 when, to everyone's surprise, he joined the United Methodist Church.
- He had taken his message across the country preaching that **miracles still occur**... that the same Holy Spirit that causes people to speak in tongues can bring about deliverance & healing today.
- Jesus himself promised we'd see miracles...
- And the book of James assures us that if any are sick & call for the leaders of the church... and are anointed with oil... the prayer of faith will bring healing!
- Pentecostals believe this wholeheartedly, and like to pray for **BIG MIRACLES!**

One of the largest & most dynamic churches in Hawaii is New Hope Christian Fellowship.

- New Hope is part of the Foursquare Gospel denomination... and is part of the Pentecostal branch of Christendom.
  - Dr. Wayne Cordeiro is the senior pastor of New Hope Oahu... a church that just celebrated its 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
  - In those 12 brief years, they've grown to over 12,000 worshippers each weekend... and over 31,000 people have made commitments to Christ for the first time!

- Outreach magazine has listed New Hope Oahu as one of the top 25 “Most Influential Churches” in America... and one of the top 10 “Most Innovative.”
- (Many of you may not know this, but Pastor Wayne performed Jody and my wedding ceremony back in 1990, for he was Jody’s pastor on the Big Island!)
- Despite their large size, New Hope does not have their own building for worship!
  - They rent space at Farrington High School... and have 5 worship services each weekend.
  - Plus, they have “extension campuses” in Manoa & on Sand Island where congregation members worship together, then get a live video link of the sermon from the Farrington site.
- When I met with Pastor Wayne recently to talk about this sermon series, I asked him to tell me what it means to be a Christian at New Hope...
  - “Our core values are our culture,” he said.
  - “The essentials would start with an **undying devotion to God and His Word.**” Everyone is encouraged to do daily Bible reading & devotions...
  - In fact, our Scripture Journaling was based on New Hope’s LIFE JOURNAL program...
  - “We are also a ‘**Harvest Church,**’ who leads people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We are not a care home for Christians,” Wayne continued, “but a training camp for the saints – an equipping center!”
  - Wayne mentioned that of the 31,000 who have made first-time decisions for Christ at New Hope, they have a 50% “stick rate” (meaning, 50% are still with them).
  - To put that in perspective, over the course of Billy Graham’s evangelistic ministry, he had a 4% stick rate.
  - “Follow up is essential,” Wayne told me. “And sometimes that means we help get new Christians into other congregations – especially when they can’t assimilate into a big church like ours.”
  - “We are a **Culture of Serving**... Putting one’s faith into action! It takes 1500 volunteers each weekend to run New Hope!”

- Wayne said that 300 separate volunteers come for each of the 5 services... some arriving as early as 3am on Sunday morning to get Farrington ready!
- “**Family** is also important to us... and we strive for **excellence** in all that we do. Excellence, but not opulence.”
- One of the tenants of Pentecostal worship is to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit during the service. I asked Pastor Wayne about how this gets played out at New Hope.
  - He said that their worship service & liturgy remain basically the same every week.
  - They begin with a series of worship songs sung back to back... maybe 3 or 4 in a row...
  - When they get to the last song, Wayne comes forward to help lead.
  - “Sometimes,” he told me, “the Holy Spirit gives me a word of discernment that I’ll share with the congregation...”
  - “It might be a word of forgiveness... a word for spouses... for healing of emotions... These become a general word to all in the church, but a prophetic word to some.”
- Before we parted, I asked Pastor Wayne if he’d be willing to share a word for our congregation.... something that might be of encouragement to us.
  - More than anything else, he wanted to talk about our Wesleyan heritage...
  - Here’s what he said...

No matter which branch of Christianity we’ve looked at over the course of this series, there are always elements that we can learn from... and take to heart to help us in our journey of faith.

- Our Pentecostal brothers and sisters are no exception! To begin with, they teach us to take seriously the **power of the Holy Spirit** that is available to every believer!
  - Pastor Adam Hamilton notes that we often try to live our Christian life without drawing on the strength of the Holy Spirit.
  - Instead, we should be asking God daily for the power of the Spirit in our lives!
- Second, Pentecostals remind us of the need to identify and use our **spiritual gifts**.

- The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit has given each of us certain gifts & abilities... some we were born with, others we acquired along the way.
- God's expectation is that we USE these gifts to SERVE others... to build up the body of Christ... and to glorify God.
- If you're not sure what your spiritual gifts might be, I encourage you to go to our website... and on the page with my sermons, you'll see a section that has a "Spiritual Gift Inventory" and a "Spiritual Gift Scoresheet."
- Print both of those out... then respond to the 36 statements using the scoresheet.
- It can be a simple way of identifying where you might be gifted by God!
- Third, I think we need to be reminded to reclaim the **healing power of prayer**... we need to pray with more boldness!
  - Tell God the desires & cries of your heart...
  - I believe that God wants each of us to be made whole...
  - That may happen here... or in eternity...
  - But it won't happen if we never ask.
- Thanks be to God for the incredible passion, vitality, creativity & spiritual power that our Pentecostal brothers & sisters bring to the family...
  - May we continue to be reminded that we are all part of the same body of Christ.
  - We are, indeed, partners in ministry for the Kingdom of God.
  - AMEN.