

LAKESWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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PENTECOST'S PROMISES
Isaiah 44:1-8

Do not fear ... for I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring (Isaiah 44:2&3).

*Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel
and his redeemer, the Lord of Hosts;
"I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god" (Isaiah 44:6).*



We are a people who LOVE PROMISES. We listen for them; we seek them out; and we save them up ... *but we do not trust them.*



We buy all kinds of electronic gadgets with GUARANTEES. Yet more often than not, we throw away the guarantee with the box. We know that the device will not be permanent, and besides, there's probably some loophole in the guarantee. And the ultimate reality is that that guarantee eventually expires.



Our lives are filled with UNSPOKEN PROMISES.

- ➔ If you work hard, you will be a success. Yet, many who work hard stand in food stamp lines.
- ➔ If you eat correctly and exercise, you will be healthy. Yet, many who seek health are imprisoned in wheelchairs, hospital beds or nursing homes.
- ➔ If you love, you will be loved. Yet, many who love are abused, divorced, or rejected.

We LOVE promises ... but we DO NOT believe them.

Even the smallest children doubt the simplest promise when they make that oath, "Cross my heart and hope to die? Stick a needle in my eye?" We simply do not trust promises ... because we do not believe in permanency. "The grass withers, the flowers fade, the world changes, and promises are not forever."



SO ... WHY should we believe in GOD'S PROMISES read today in the Isaiah text? What is so **SPECIAL** and **DEPENDABLE** about this Pentecost's promise from God?

Simply put:

- ➔ These promises are **FOREVER**. God promised to pour his Spirit upon Israel's descendants and bless their offspring. And that promise was **REALIZED** first in the life of Christ and then at the birthday of the church on that first Pentecost 2000 years ago.
- ➔ **THIS** promise is **BINDING** because God is the first and the last. There is no other.
- ➔ God is **LOVE** and that **LOVE** is **PERMANENT**.



I often talk with parents before the baptism of their first baby. They have tell-tale dark circles under their eyes caused by sleepless nights of feeding the child. I

tell them to get used to it because the nights of uninterrupted sleep are gone forever. It won't be long until the child will awake with earaches, stuffy noses, and fevers. And the parents will rock, bathe, and Tylenol until dawn's early light.

Later, the child will be jarred awake in terror to the sound of thunder crashing or the inevitability of those dreaded bad dreams and scurry into mom and dad's bed. So, the parents will awaken to nurture and to cuddle until dawn's early light.

Still later, the child will awaken with worries about tests and problems with their peers. The parents will get up to listen to dawn's early light.

And then, so much later the child will never have gone to sleep and the parents will stay awake worrying and watching until they hear the sound of the door closing. There's another dawn's early light.

Our Lord loves us, his own children, so much more than we can even love our children. We are God's children as John declares: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God..." (John 1:12) Isaiah's promise is that God's spirit will be poured upon God's descendants and God will bless his offspring. You see, God never slumbers or sleeps ... but says, "Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened for you."

This one God WAITS until dawn's early light.

This Pentecost promise is FOREVER.

God is the FIRST and the LAST.

There is NO OTHER.



I've spent a lot of time with teens through the years of my ministry.

Eleven of them are here today, on this Pentecost Sunday, and have made an affirmation of their faith as they joined the church.

But what I've seen is that teens are AFRAID. They go to school one day and they are liked and popular. The next day, they are "put down" and labeled "nerds." They are under extreme pressure to achieve: win the game, get the grades, go to the best colleges, earn the money. They wear designer clothes to feel secure. And unlike any other time in our society, they are freely offered the options of fast driving, free hours, and fantasy escapes into alcohol and drugs. THEY ARE AFRAID!

They say to me, "How can we make a public profession of our faith PROMISING to continue in the Covenant God made with us in baptism? How will I keep my PROMISE?"

I respond that they CAN make promises because they can always seek the guidance and help of God.

- I remind them that their God PROMISES ... ever since their baptisms ... that they are important no matter how much or how little they achieve.
- I remind them that their God PROMISES ... to be there in bread and wine even when they think that they are totally alone.
- I remind them that their God PROMISES ... to call them one by one to be his disciples.
- I remind them that their God PROMISES ... to help and guide them.



As many of you know, our son, Jeremy has battled addiction for many years. It is a constant struggle for anyone with these demons. The last year for Jeremy has been the best year in a long, long time. I can't begin to tell you how PROUD I am of him and especially how PROUD Karen and I were when he joined the church a few weeks ago. But I'm even MORE PROUD for something he shared with me on Friday morning before he left for work. He said, "Dad, I've memorized the Alcoholics Anonymous Prayer." And then he said it for me:

God, I offer myself to Thee,
to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.
Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.
Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness
to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love and Thy way of life.
May I do Thy will always.
Amen.

Jeremy finally has gotten it ... he can rely on God's *PROMISE* to be with him.
Jeremy knows that he can seek God's *GUIDANCE* and *HELP* every day of his life and in
so doing, he can be used by God to make a difference in the lives of others.

Our teens need to understand that! They are *afraid* and with *good reason*.
But these are *BELIEVABLE PROMISES* of this Pentecost.

*"Do not fear ... for I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry
ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your
offspring."*

**This Pentecost promise is FOREVER.
God is the FIRST and the LAST.
There is NO OTHER.**



I spend time with the aged. There are *more* aged now in this generation than
ever before.

- In our *transient society*, many are *separated* from their immediate family ... and
that can be *SCARY*.
- Some have *outlived* their *friends* and their *jobs*. They *FEAR USELESSNESS*.
- They *FEAR* the "heroics" of medical science as much as they *FEAR* death.
- They've seen a world that has *changed* from the *woodstove* to the *microwave*,
from the *Model T* to the *Space Shuttle*, from things *sun dried* to *freeze dried*.
- ★ *They view a world that moves fast, and they are not able to run.*

**And to the aged, the PROMISES of this Pentecost are INVALUABLE,
because our Lord will pour out his Spirit upon all descendants and his blessings
will be a gift to them.**

*"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things
present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all
creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"*
(Romans 8:38-39).

They will never live alone for *"If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die
to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's"* (Romans
14:8).



**God's LOVE is PERMANENT.
God's PROMISE is PERMANENT.
God is the FIRST and the LAST.
There is NO OTHER.**

**PENTECOST promises.
PERMANENT promises.
GOD'S promises.**

Amen and Amen.