

They were All Together in One Place

July 2020

Three months without worshipping together has been very difficult! I was particularly sad on Pentecost, because I remembered that I preached my first sermon in Japanese last year on Pentecost Sunday. You were all so supportive and encouraging. I thank you very much!

This year, as I prepared my English sermon for Pentecost to put on YouTube, I got interested in Acts 2:1, "They were all together in one place." I never even noticed this sentence before!

The reason it became so interesting to me was that we were *not allowed* to be all together in one place! During a pandemic, it's important to avoid crowded spaces and large groups. All the basic requirements of a worship service at church suddenly became a danger!

So it has been necessary to spend time away from church. And yet, the story of Pentecost begins: "They were all together in one place." This shows us that the Holy Spirit values the gathering of faithful people.

Yes, the Holy Spirit is given to each of us individually. But, the Holy Spirit also wants us to come "all together in one place."

Why is it so important to be "all together in one place?"

1. Nobody is a private believer. If you believe in the gospel, it's because someone else shared it with you: a friend, your parents, a pastor. Maybe you read a book or heard a radio program about Christianity—but that was still someone else communicating with you. If you are a Christian, then you are part of the body of Christ. You belong to Christ, but you also belong to all the other people who belong to Christ.

2. This is good, because it's hard to believe alone! People who try to be totally private about faith will lose their faith. We need each other to keep our faith strong. You may be surprised to learn that you don't come to church to build up *your own* faith—you come to church to build up *other* people's faith. And they, in turn come to build up *your* faith. That is the main reason to come to church!

3. Finally, the Holy Spirit gathers us "all together in one place" to remind us that salvation is for our *bodies*. Many people, even Christians, make the mistake of thinking that salvation is of the "soul." But Jesus promises the resurrection of our bodies, just like his own body was raised from the dead. God our Father created our bodies and blessed them. He gives us food and shelter to preserve; we pray to Him for the protection and healing of our bodies. We come together in person for worship so that we can see each other as bodies that are blessed by God and will be raised from the dead.

I keep you all in my prayers, and look forward to seeing you in person once again!

Pastor Sarah