

Hey everybody, Jay Pathak here. I'm the National Director for Vineyard USA and it's Pentecost Sunday. So I'm really excited to share with you. There's hundreds of Vineyard churches all over the country that are taking this day to think about Pentecost. And if you've been in church, you kind of know what that name means. But there's probably a lot of you who've never heard of this. And why would we think about Pentecost Sunday and what even is Pentecost? It's kinda a weird name, <laugh>. And, and why are you gonna focus all of the Vineyard on this? And the reason is well, because as the Vineyard, we are a people of the Spirit. We believe in the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit, that we can have encounters with the living God, that he's alive. And I don't know if you would agree, but it's my experience, at least in Denver it seems to be true, that people are looking for the supernatural.

People want to have experiences outside of just their own physical life and sort of the physical world that we live in. There's a place in Denver that I drive by quite a bit where there's a famous psychic, and this person's so famous that there are people that are literally lined around the corner. Like around the block, there's a line of people that are waiting to get a tarot card reading or sort of a psychic reading. And it's like around the block every single day. The line starts at like seven in the morning and it kind of goes all the way till they're closed. And I think to myself, every time I drive by, there's no line around the block to get into any church I know. You know, just waiting to get in to have a spiritual moment, a spiritual experience. And why is that?

It's as though, you know, people just don't think these kinds of things happen in church. Like you would have to go to a tarot card reader, a psychic, or somebody with crystals or any number of other things, but not necessarily in a church. But we in the Vineyard believe that when we're gathered together, when we worship, and when we do the kinds of things that you've done today, that God is among us, that he's with us by the power and the presence of his spirit. And that he intends to engage us in every way that we might experience him. Not just think about him, not just believe in him, not just have ideas that help us think about our life, though we do that kind of stuff, you know, we'll teach and pastor and hang out and be together, but that were led by his presence in a supernatural way.

And this day, Pentecost Sunday is a day that the church has remembered, an incredible day that was after the death and the resurrection of Jesus, where he died, he rose again. And then in Acts chapter one, verse eight, he says, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. You will be my witnesses and Jerusalem, Judeah and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. And so the disciples waited and they prayed for this outpouring of God's presence. So the passage is in Acts chapter two, I think we'll have it up there for you too, but let me read it for us. In Acts chapter two, Luke writing, cuz kind of Acts is a continuation of the gospel of Luke. Luke writing says this, when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now, there were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked, aren't all these who were speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes, and I don't know, not gonna read all the

places cuz I'm gonna mispronounce 'em. But from everywhere, the whole list, it goes all the way down to verse 11. Uh, I'll read the last one. And Arabs, we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues.

Amazed and perplexed they asked one another, what does this mean? Some, however, made fun of them and said they've had too much wine. I love the way that text ends. They've had too much wine. I know that we're in church, you're good Christians. So you would not probably even know what it looks like for someone to be drunk. Like "Jay, I've seen it in a movie, I've heard about it." It's possible you don't even know what we're talking about. But at the very least what we know is that they're watching these people and they're going, "They're behaving really strangely. Somehow they're all talking in all of our languages." It's quite literally a miracle. And there's some debate amongst scholars, like, is it that the miracle is that they can hear them speaking their own languages or is the miracle that they're actually speaking in other languages?

It's kind of important. Like is it interpretive or is it the power to actually speak the other languages? Either way, we're not entirely sure. People can argue about that forever, but whatever this is, it's a miracle. It's wild. And if you go up and you look at the front of that text, whatever we know about what's going on, which is some kind of miracle of interpretation or speaking some kind of way that they're behaving strangely, like they're drunk, whatever this is, it's inherently experiential. The language that's used here is encounter language, right? I mean, listen to the things that are described. They see something that looks like tongues of fire. So it's visible, they can see it. They hear something that sounds like winds. So even this text that says they all came running because they heard the sound, the question is, what was the sound?

Is it the wind itself? Is it hearing all these people shouting out another languages? We're not sure; the commentators argue about that, but whatever it is, this encounter with God is heard as wind. They feel something, you know, there's something happening in their affect. And, and the way that they're experiencing this, and this is consistent throughout the scriptures. Throughout the scriptures, when people experience God, and specifically the Holy Spirit, the language that's used is things that are seen, felt, heard. Uh, the Holy Spirit is often described either in terms of fire, water, wind. Each of these descriptions necessitates an encounter, an experience with your senses. Something that's seen, heard or felt. So this kind of crazy experience does something to them. And all of the sudden we have Peter preach a message. Uh, I don't have time to read the entire passage. You can read it on your own if you want, but he preaches a message.

And this message he preaches about how this moment, this experience that they're having where the presence and the power of the spirit is poured out, is the fulfillment of what prophets had said hundreds of years earlier, specifically the prophet Joel that says that one day God will pour out his Spirit and people will hear from God and they will speak words from God. And that old men will dream dreams, young men will see visions. And he uses this passage and he says, so here's the deal, guys. You're standing in a miraculous moment that God told you about a long time ago, and you should give your life to Jesus Christ. Because here's what this proves, here's what this moment with the Holy Spirit proves: that God came in the person of Jesus. He died, he rose again, and now he's pouring out his Spirit.

Now, this is not a small thought. Um, I don't know if you've had somebody die recently or if you've had somebody near you get a terminal diagnosis. I mean, the fact of the matter is, I mean, I can say something definitively about you right now, and that is this: you are going to die. Every single one of us is going to die. Uh, actually it's worse than that. Right now you are dying. Question is just how quickly you're dying. You're dying right now. Right now, as you're breathing, you're a breath closer to dying. Your heart is a heartbeat closer to dying. Your body proves this to you like you're decaying, aren't you? You know, and your knees feel a little different than they did not that... Some of you're young, you're going, no, I feel great. I'm getting stronger. You will, you won't. It's, it's coming.

You, your bo... You know there's, hair will grow outta your ears. All kinds of things demonstrate that the world around you, including you, is decaying. You are dying. And death is the biggest obstacle. It's the thing that we most have to contend with. That's the thing we most fear. Here's the crazy message of Peter and that it runs through the story. Jesus has pierced through the veil of death. And that should give us great encouragement. It means that you can follow Jesus even through death. You can have hope. You can have life and, and listen, it's worth pausing right now to just talk to you. If you are not sure if you have a life with Jesus, here's the great news. God made a way for you to have life with him, that you would never have to be afraid of anything, even death, because God came and he reached for you.

Uh, this is where the life that we have in Jesus stands apart from every other religious system. Every other religious system says, you gotta do this and not do that. And if you just subscribe to this and you don't subscribe to that, then you're sort of in with God. But here's the message that we find in the scriptures, even in Peter's little speech here at Pentecost, which is this: you will never reach to God. Like, there's no way to try to be good enough, to try hard enough. God reached to you in the person of Jesus Christ. Your arms were not long enough to reach to him, but his were long enough to reach to you. And here's the question, here's the challenge for each of us, that each of us has to consider is this. For most people, they think that the dividing line in life with God is between good and bad.

Am I good person? Am I a bad person? Here's what the scripture says, scriptures say really clearly. No, that's not the right dividing line. It's all bad people. Like, however bad you think you are, it is so much worse than you know. And no matter how good you think certain people are, they are way worse than they show you. I mean, amen. Married people, right? You, you know, you know who your spouse, you know the flaws that no one else knows. All the more true then, a holy God who is perfect and loving, how much more in the light of his brilliance do your flaws show? He is unlike anyone you've ever imagined. He's more loving and good and kind than you could imagine. And so here's the difference of the message that's found in Jesus. The dividing line is not between good and bad.

The dividing line is between humble people and prideful people. Will you receive the gift that's offered in Jesus Christ? And this is the basic message of Peter which is, this proves that this death, this resurrection, his ascension is for you. He came for you. Now the question is, will you receive that gift of life? And what's amazing about this sermon is it says 3000 people were added to their number that day. I mean, this is Peter. This is a guy that just failed just the other page, right? Like he messed everything up. But even in his life, it shows that Jesus came for him to pull him into a different kind of life. So it's, worth starting and saying, have you received that? Have you said yes to the life that's offered in Jesus? But there's more than that in this passage, as Jesus pierced through death into a new life, it also means that

as he poked that hole through that thin veil of this physical world, it means now that heaven is breaking backward into this world.

It's not just that he shows a way into heaven, but now he's made a way for heaven to come to earth. And that's what's being expressed in this moment. The power and the presence of God is being poured out on people. And, and this power is so overwhelming. It's changing the way even their body works and what they say and how they behave to where they look drunk to other people. But here's the basic thought, and this is really important you hear this. There's many people who have been raised in church that've not heard what I'm about to say. And I think it holds up. If you read through the whole scriptures, the story of the Bible is not base, it's basically, uh, not a message of how you get to heaven. Many of you have heard, man, the reason you need to know Jesus so you can get to heaven.

That's basically not the message. The message is this: Jesus did stuff so that heaven gets into you. It's not about you trying to get into heaven, it's about heaven getting into you. And that's what we experience with the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. We're experiencing the power of heaven in our bodies, in our lives, in our minds. And this isn't like some other worldly experience. It's not like, you know, you're going into some kind of fake thin existence. You know, when people think of heaven, they're thinking about like harps and clouds and you know, all those cartoon images. It's actually quite the opposite according to scriptures. According to the Bible, the world you're living in now is a fake world. It's corrupted, it's fragile, it's broken, it's decaying. And when heaven breaks in, it's like you're suddenly introduced to reality. The fullness and the thickness of a life with God, frankly is more weighty and powerful than this thin world that we live in. That's why people's bodies react. Uh, they, they talk differently, they act differently. They experience things that maybe even would set their body to right. That's what we see as healing in the scriptures, is what is promised in heaven where everything's made right and it's restored and new and whole. When the presence and power of the kingdom of God comes, the Holy Spirit, it sets things to right, restores things.

I don't know if you've ever run Alpha, if you have Alpha in your church or if you've not heard of Alpha, um, I think it's worth looking up online. You know, it's a class that came outta some Anglican churches in the UV but we in the Vineyard have been partnering with them and working with Alpha all across the country. And I love Alpha because it's a great experience for people that don't really know what they think about Jesus or life with God to be able to come in, learn some things, ask some questions, have a discussion around a meal, and many people discover a new kind of life with God by participating in Alpha.

And so we run Alpha in our church and there's a story, there's one moment that happened that really changed me, uh, where there was a guy, uh, in one of our alpha classes, a guy named Alex. He was, he's an atheist. And then he was, he's an engineer. Do you know engineers? You know, people that like spreadsheets, you know, they like things, they're like really specific and they, you know, concrete that they can manage. And so Alex is in our Alpha class and he's just taking the opportunity to argue every single time we're talking about life with God. And he's like, well, how do you know this? You can't prove that. And I remember thinking, why is he here? I think maybe he just liked to argue with people. I'm not sure. But we had a thing that was called the weekend away, which many times you do in Alpha.

And he's sitting there listening to us teach. And that one we were doing live and I was teaching about the Holy Spirit. And we did our first talk, and I remember he grabbed me in the hallway and he said, "Hey man, I'm not sure what you're doing, but I can tell it's like crescendoing, like you're about to try to do something like, to us. I wanna be clear, I'm not doing it. I don't know what you're doing, but I'm not gonna do it." I said, "that's fine." And the very next talk was being filled with the Holy Spirit. And so I do this whole talk on being filled with the Holy Spirit and you end by telling people, "if you would like to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we would love to pray for you. Why don't you just stand right where you're at? You can just stand up and we'll pray that you're filled with the Holy Spirit." And sure enough, right then Alex just pops to his feet. He's right in front of me, and I walk over to him and I'm like, "I thought you said you weren't gonna do it." He said, "yeah, I know, but I'm already here, why not?" "Well, what I don't, you wanna be filled with the spirit?" He's like, "sure." I'm like, "well, I don't, I don't think it works like that. I think, I think you kind of have to want, like, you're asking God for something." He's like, "okay." And I'm like, "no. Again, that I don't know. I dunno if that's like a real confession of faith. You have to be saying, yeah, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit." He's like, "okay, yeah." I'm "no, I, ugh, I don't feel, I don't know if it works like this."

And you know, we're going back and forth. And finally he says, "you know what, Jay, if this is true, why wouldn't I want more of God? So yeah, of course." So I put my hand on his chest and I said, "Alex, be filled with the Holy Spirit." And he fell to his knees and he started sobbing, he's crying. And I don't know if you've ever been in a moment like this in prayer where you're praying for someone or you're even in a moment by yourself praying or someone's praying for you, and it's overwhelming. You have like an experience with God, much like we talked about, where something is felt, something is experienced. You're not just passing notes under the door. You have an experience of God. And he's crying and he's, you know, and you know, and I don't know if you've ever been in these moments, you pray it starts to get awkward cause you're like, I don't know, should I just, how long do I, how long do I do this?

You know, like what point do I just walk away? So finally I just walked away, I just wandered off. I was like, I don't know, 15 minutes later. He's just there crying. So then we have a break, and it's like in the break he sees me in the hallway, he goes, "I gotta talk to you." And I'm thinking, I bet you do. And he grabs me and he says, "Jay, this is real." I said, "yeah, I know, I know, I know it's real." And he goes, "no, no, not like the way, not like the way you're saying, I mean, it's like real." I go, "I know, I know. I know this is real." He goes, ""no, no. And he's a little frustrated. He's like, "no, not like the way like a preacher says things are real. I mean like, it's like real." And this time I'm a little, I'm a little offended like, what did you think I was doing this whole time?

Like I'm just making stuff up? And he goes, and he could see I'm a little thrown off and then he pauses, he goes, "no, I mean this is real like gravity is real. It's real like that." And I'll never forget that because he was trying to say something significant. You know, he was living in a world where he said, okay, I do all my normal life. And then there's this sort of spiritual, moral stuff you try to tell me about, with Jesus and dying and stuff that's really far from me. But Jay, this thing, this life that we have with God, this life that Jesus has given us is as real or maybe more real than gravity. And I just wanna say the scriptures make a really clear case that that's true. There's some of you that, you know, you maybe believe the right things, you've maybe said the right things, you try to do the right things.

You even find yourself in church, but you kind of think, "yeah, I mean I, but then I go and do my real life." This is kind of this thin churchy thing. But then, then you have to do your real life. And what Alex was saying is what the scripture say is true is that no, this life that we have with God is real like gravity is real. Actually it's more real than that because this life that we have with God will extend past even your death. This life we have with God will change and transform and make all things new again. So I guess the question that you have to answer, which I can't answer for you, is, how much reality do you really want? How much of life with God do you really want? A.W. Tozer, who is a great theologian, thinker, preacher, he had a question he would ask when he talks about the Holy Spirit.

I think it's a really good question. He would ask, "do you want to be possessed by the Holy Spirit? Do you wanna be possessed by the Holy Spirit?" It's kind of a strange term, isn't it? I mean, if I said instead just like this, would you like to be possessed? I think, I think each one of you would go, no, because when we say possessed, we automatically think of evil, don't we? You think of some dark movie you've seen, some, you know, where some, somebody's, their head, I mean, again, I know you're Christians, you've probably never seen anything like this, but you're, their head spins around and they shoot like green liquid out of their mouth or whatever and right? I mean, there's always some little girl involved in these movies. I don't know why. But anyway, like, like there's this, those are the images that you know, and it's kind of darkly lit, maybe a strobe light or something.

That's what you think of when you think of possession. And what do we mean when we think about demonic possession or possessed by evil? What we mean is some kind of force, some kind of personal force that's evil inhabits maybe your body, your mind, changes your personality in the way that you think, in the way that you feel. That's what it means to have evil possess you. Tozer's question is really relevant because what he's saying is, in the same way evil can possess you, don't you believe that good can? The scriptures talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit. And what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to have God's presence overwhelm you, alter your personality, change how you think, change like even maybe how you might talk or feel, experience others in the world around you. And Tozer says, "you know, many people, they want enough of the Holy Spirit to just sort of make it through life." But he says, "but do you want to be possessed by the Holy Spirit? Now, we don't have time to look at it, but you can look at it later. In Ephesians chapter five, Paul says, don't get drunk with wine. You know, don't do these other things that people do. Instead, because that's a way of feeling filled of being influenced. He says, instead be filled with the Holy Spirit. Speak to one another in spiritual ways, like sing songs and hymns, uh, with gladness in your heart, connect to one another and ask that you might be filled, immersed, overwhelmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. And he, and he effectively says, the verb form he uses there is be filled and keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit. So I ask you again, do you want to be possessed by the Holy Spirit? To have God immerse you with his presence, his love, his mercy, his kindness?

The New Testament talks about fruit of the Spirit. Like your very character can change as you've been encountered by, filled, and keep on being filled by the Holy Spirit. Self-control, kindness, different kinds of attributes are fruit of the Spirit because you're being filled with the spirit. Some of you have been trying so hard, I'm trying not to be angry. I'm trying to have self-control. I'm trying to overcome these things. And what the scripture says, what you need is to yield yourself to the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Do you want to be filled afresh with the power of the Holy Spirit? See, in the Vineyard,

we're a people that say, "come, Holy Spirit," it's an ancient prayer. We pray it all the time in our gatherings. Come, Holy Spirit. We're not saying God isn't already with us. What we are saying is "warm our affections to you. Touch our bodies, touch our minds, take over our lives. Fill this place in all of us with the power and the presence of heaven itself."

Lemme just say one last thing, and then we're gonna take a minute now and we're gonna pray, and we're gonna ask God to fill you afresh with His spirit. Uh, many, if not all of our Vineyard churches take time every week to wait on God, to listen to God, and to pray for one another because every Sunday can be Pentecost Sunday. I wanna just give you one last thought. Where some of you are nervous, you're saying, you know, I was in a church tradition where I was told, if you open yourself up spiritually, what if like instead of bumping into God, you bump into a demon. Like am I allowed to say, you know, open myself and say, "God, give me your Spirit."

What if something evil comes in? Well, Jesus addresses this directly. He says this interesting thing at the end of teaching on prayer where he says, you know, which of you fathers though you are evil? I mean, first of all, he calls all dad's evil. Not entirely wrong, but though you were evil, which of you fathers that if your son were to ask you for a fish, would they give you a scorpion instead? Or if you were, if you were to ask for bread, they would give you, you know, a snake. I mean, what Dad would torture their kid by giving 'em something evil when they ask for something good? He says, "but here's the deal. You who are evil, kind of, you know, you wouldn't do that. How much more?" Here's how it ends. "How much more then will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks?"

How much more then will God give his Spirit to those who ask?" All over the Vineyard, all over this country, frankly, outside of this country, around the world, we're coming before God again and saying, "come, Holy Spirit, fill us afresh, fill our churches, fill our lives." Cuz here's the truth, guys. What God wants to do in the world is gonna take a lot more than your intelligence, your best effort, our best gifts, our, the most charisma we have. We need to be filled afresh with the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. So let me pray for us. So Holy Spirit, I pray for each church, each Vineyard church. I pray that you would come, we pray the ancient prayer, come Holy Spirit, fill us afresh. And there's some today that today is their day to just say yes to you, Lord Jesus. They came with a friend.

They're not even sure why they're here, but they're realizing right now because you're speaking to 'em that this is real. This is true. And it's time for them to yield, to receive the gift of life that's offered in you, Jesus. That you died, you rose again, you ascended and you're calling their name. So for those of, those who are thinking that right now, reach to them now, Lord. There's others of us that, we've been followers of you, but we've been dry, we're tired, we're worn out. And we say again, come Holy Spirit, pour out your spirit on every Vineyard church right now. Pour out your spirit afresh. And pour out your spirit on every church, the whole body of Christ. We say, God, we need a refreshing of your spirit. We need the water of your presence to quench us. We need the wind of your spirit to carry us. We need the fire of your spirit to burn away everything that should not remain. And I pray a fresh outpouring of your presence. Fill us afresh. Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.