

# CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

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## THE DAY OF PENTECOST

May 24, 2026

*Acts 2: 1-21 Psalm 104:24-34, 34b; 1 Corinthians 12: 3b-13; Saint John 20: 19-23*

***In nomine Jesu!***

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

By my calculation, we will have spoken this dialogue 104 times since our April 4 Easter Vigil. By the conclusion of today's liturgies, we will not need to say this until March 27, 2027, 285 days from now. We won't need to say this after today; we'll just need to live it.

That's what Pentecost is all about! God's Promise to every child of earth and all creation that Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and ascended will be boldly and publicly present and actively involved in human society through each and all of us. We, my friends, are just as surely the "real Presence" of Christ for the world as the bread and wine of the Eucharist is the "real Presence" of Christ for us. The same Holy Spirit that makes bread and wine the Body and Blood of Christ is poured into us to make us the Body and Blood of Christ for the world. So, we are not merely celebrating the "Birthday of the Church" today, we are really celebrating the resurrection of the crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus Christ, present and engaged in human society in, with, and through us. So that we don't miss this our God-given, Spirit-driven calling, today's Gospel is the same one we heard on Easter Sunday when the newly risen Christ breathes the Holy Spirit on the male and female disciples, empowering them to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed.

What is the Gospel? First let me remind you what the Gospel is not. At last Sunday's forum, Pastor Mitri Raheb from Palestine told us something shocking: that the AI system used to target and guide Israeli attacks in Gaza is called "gospel." I researched this and it turns out to be true; the Hebrew for this, Habsora, is indeed gospel; probably a nod to that regime's American Christian Zionist supporters.

By the way, Mitri reminded us that most American Christian Zionists live in Texas.

I doubt I need to say this, but I will: the Gospel, what the Gospel of John calls "the Word made flesh," is Jesus Christ and must not be weaponized. It's meant to include, not exclude; and if we need any proof of that it is right here in today's first reading in the list of all the homelands of those diaspora Jews gathered in Jerusalem. The very first nationality named in that list are Parthians. Do you know who these were, and still are? When Acts was first written, they were the only empire the Roman Empire could not conquer and the only empire the Romans feared. They were not just a language group on the first Pentecost; they were an enemy language group. Earlier, they called themselves Persians. Lest we think of today's readings as ancient history, today they call themselves Iranians. The first day of Pentecost which concluded with the baptism of 3,000 people included enemies. That's the proper, the lively, use of the Gospel. Clearly not a weapon.

What <sup>is</sup> the Gospel? There's not enough time in any sermon for a full theological statement. But in today's Gospel reading from John, the risen Christ provides a short answer in one brief sentence, part of which is woefully misunderstood, and yes, wrongly weaponized. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Spirit-filled Christians are called and empowered to forgive; that is our primary task. Forgive, not merely in our hearts or our minds, but forgive with our voices; speak it, don't just think it. The Gospel – the Word made flesh – is meant to be spoken. Aloud. To others. ALL are tasked with doing just that.

Peter does precisely that in his first public sermon. He takes a clear text of judgment from the prophet Joel – the same text of judgment we hear addressed to us every Ash Wednesday – and uses it to help those gathered hear the Gospel, God's promise to pour out the Spirit "upon all flesh," forming "all flesh" into Gospel-proclaiming people too.

What happens if we don't address the issue, name the sin? What happens if we don't forgive? Jesus states the obvious result: "... they are retained." Retaining sin is not an authoritative power; it is an inevitable result. And when it festers, there is a multiplication of evil, which is precisely where we live today.

That's why the risen Christ breathes the Holy Spirit into us. To make us, as the Spirit makes the water in the font and the bread and wine on the table, the means by which God deals with all the troubles of this world. For this we were baptized; for this we are nourished; for this we are formed and raised to be bread for the world. So that we might live daily and be for others exactly what we have shouted 104 times over the last Fifty Days:

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Amandus J. Derr  
Interim Senior Pastor