

I wonder I wonder. (John 7:37-39a)

* Dear Friends, it shouldn't surprise us that we don't know many things. When we meditate over God's words sometimes we are wondered with fresh ideas. God's words are mysteriously infinite, we've never grasped them completely. Those of you who thirsting for the deeper understanding may be compared with a person who decides to reach bottom digging a well. By the way, each of us has his/her own bottom or summit, if you like it more. Actually our achievements are dependable at list from two things. They depend from our personal hunger for knowledge; and second! They depend, guess from whom? You're right! because a man can not grasp God's mind by himself, he needs a mediator. With this in mind I found the painting by Caspar Friedrich, titled *The Wander above a sea of Fog*. This masterpiece can serve as a supplement to the sound doctrine. Here it's the reflection.

* Friends, imagine a civilian man whose name is *The Wander*, standing on upward rocky place turning his back to you. Leaning on a walking stick that man stands at the very end of edge. Intentionally you also become *The Wonders* as well as you're amazed together impressed by the panorama of the huge landscaping and the global sky. A foggy layer under your feet quasi hides a land. Only the two rocky giants you can see clearly. You might guess that the hidden land under man's feet represents human history and the sky stand for future knowledge. Logically the knowledge of the past and future is getting known less as soon as the objects on the picture are taken further and further. The horizon is not visible because the foggy landscape mysteriously turns into whitish sky. Both the remote land and sky become the one body in a view of spectator. Being wondered with panorama we might also wonder after observing the man. You noticed that his body appears almost suspended between the ground and the sky. It shows that human race belong the past, present and future. The essential knowledge of past and future, likewise the two painted mountains beneath and a few clouds above, was grasped by the human mind. On the other hand, the man is absolutely helpless to grasp what is behind him. I am sure nobody can grasp what is behind the veil. Providing imagery says that there are something beyond of our perception; something that can not be seen even with Hubble space telescope. Moving from abstraction to reality let say what is going in the world today. Alright, today Church celebrates the Day of the Great Mediator, the Holy Spirit. He enables the disciples to grasp the God's message and believe, and by believing the disciples may have life in Jesus name.

* The Lord said that people will not walk in darkness any more. On the fiftieth day after his resurrection Christ sent the mediator, the Holy Spirit. Its coming lights many hearts and minds. As it is written in Act 2:17, "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;" Through the Mediator we received knowledge that the Spirit would be the possession of the coming Davidic King (Is. 11:2) and of the Servant of the Lord (Is. 42:1), and that in the future there would be a dramatic extension of the spiritual activities (Ezek. 36:26; Joel 2:28-32).

* Dear Friends, each Sunday we gather together in church for giving because of receiving. Surely without receiving the Holy Spirit we would be not able to understand and witness. The Pentecost became ours as soon as we received the knowledge and the Spirit. Today when we think over a history of Christianity we again wondering God's wisdom and his acts of salvation through Jesus Christ.

This Sunday reading says, "On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water,'" (Joh 7:37,38). Here Jesus had in mind the Holy Spirit that like the living water awakes the lost from the spiritual death.

* Friends, thinking back to Pentecost, the 10 occurrences were seen on the landscape of ancient history. These ten were groped in five matrixes into view of their identity. Here they are: *The Ten Commandments Given*, to ancient Israel and *The Holy Spirit given*, to the disciples of Jesus Christ. Next, *Old Israel received the Law in the 50th day after the crossing of the Red Sea*; and *The disciples of Christ received the Holy Spirit in the 50th days after Jesus resurrection*. Next, Jews memorialized the *Law of Yahweh written in Stone*, and Christians memorialize *Law of Yahweh written in our hearts*. Next, Jews memorialized *Three thousand slain due to apostasy*, but Christians memorialize, *Three thousand man and women who received salvation at that day*. And the last, while Jews dream with the harsh reality of *The letter of the Law*, Christians enjoy the reality of *The Spirit of the Law*. After contrasting the five important Jewish Pentecostal ideas with the five Christian we can understand God's mind a little better praising Jesus Christ for the gift of the new life in the Holy Spirit. Friends, the Pentecostal imageries were unknown for many generations before Christ, until the promised grace was gotten into effect in our hearts and minds with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Great Mediator has enabled us to grasp what is behind the veil.

* We continue to 'dig the well' seeing Pentecostal sacred meaning from agricultural imagery. In fact without Passover there would be no Pentecost. The two major and minor fests, Passover and Unleavened Bread were celebrated during the early grain harvest. Traditionally the first sheaf of barley was put aside with sacred purpose. It was cut and waved before God. From that day up to seven weeks forward was called the Pentecostal feast. (Lev 23:15-17; Deut 16:10,16). When the seven weeks were gone, on the last day of the feast there was made the presentation of two loaves of leavened, salted bread unto the Lord, (Lev 23:16,17).

* The symbolic imageries became knowledgeable when the Holy Spirit opened minds and hearts of the believers. Now there is essential knowledge given to us. The wave sheaf, (Lev 23:6-11), personifies a resurrected Jesus who now is serving as our High Priest (Heb 4:14). Symbolically two loaves represent God's spiritual fruits, persons who are called and faithfully obey God in this life (Rom 8:24; James 1:18). In this sense, as the wave-sheaf offering was the necessary forerunner of the Pentecost offering, so was Jesus Christ the necessary forerunner of God's people. Jesus is the firstfruit of all who have fallen asleep and of all who await the resurrection on the last day (1 Cor 15:20). Christian Pentecost finds its fulfillment beginning from

ingathering of 3,000 souls at the Jerusalem and continues with every time the Holy Spirit gathers a new soul into the communion of saints that is Church.

* Dear Friend, while the panorama of our salvation getting wider and clearer we are wondering to that hidden wisdom of God having been prepared before the ages for Christ's glory and ours as well, (1Co 2:7). By the way, have you noticed that the harvest is not ended yet? Indeed 2009 it's still not the end. Doesn't the Holy Spirit give us the knowledge and the power to be the harvesters? Indeed, we are equipped with essential knowledge and love towards the lost. The history of Christianity witnesses that after receiving the Great Commission the disciples of Christ went out in the world to preach the Gospel and make the gentiles the disciples of Jesus Christ, (Mt 28: 19,20). No doubt, from that memorial Day up to now the Holy Spirit enables the harvesters ingathering a remnant.

* When I attempt to understand the reason why our church is emptied, I again came up with the same question. "Is the harvest over or there is still a time for gathering? Recently I read the memorial booklet issued especially on the day of celebration the 75 years anniversary of St.Luke's. I counted the six harvesters/pastors during this period. From my opinion, two of them were the best. First, the founder of our church, Rev. Henry Koepchen, served to this congregation for 38 years, until the Lord called him out of this world. And second harvester, Rev. William Mitschke, served for 8 years. These two pastors gathered more and lost less than other pastors after them. Next to that the anniversary writing says, "... in 1966 the church reached its peak." Friends, it seems unbelievable, 373 baptized members; 283 communicants who gathered for worship each Sunday. Actually that time the church held two Sunday services; otherwise it would be not enough sits for everybody. With coming next pastor in 1970, Rev. Willis Poggemeier, the congregation had already started to decline in number! It would be interesting to know how many people left the congregation and how many were gathered during the twelve years of his ministering; but the fact is that the church started to declined in numbers because many didn't care or share. After Rev. Poggemeier there were five or so other harvesters. Their outcome is that today we have less than twenty active communicants on Sunday. During 33 years the church was declined in 15 times. Proportionally the church loses 8 souls in each year, if we assume that no one new member came. Why is it happened? The article speaks out the three reasons. Here it is, some moved; some died; and some became inactive. It doesn't say because some pastors and leaders were moved, died, or became inactive. It doesn't say because the shift was made from spiritual things towards substantial, or because love was replaced with formalism, or because the mission was abandoned. Meanwhile in 1994 as the anniversary paper says, the congregation pledged, "to reach new people with the hope..." Next to that it says, "1) We continue our work together believing that God is on our side. 2) We will continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 3) We will hold to the Christian Faith as it is expressed through our Lutheran Confessions. 4) We will continue to be the gate of heaven which holds out the way of salvation in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ."

* Today we celebrate the Day of the Holy Spirit looking forward with hope to another, the 90th Anniversary. Being wondering by outcome of that harvesting we were renewed in hope and confidence. May some of you are not sure that the Holy Spirit will fill us with energy, wisdom, faith and love let's focus on Jesus who received the highest position in heaven and in earth. Nothing impossible for a believer, who trust and love. Certainly the Lord wants us to be active and fruitful giving us something special.

* Finally as we've entrusted to the Lord we received knowledge and vision our future. God has already made many things through us and continue to work through us as you can see. I believe with the arriving my sister in Christ Stacey Basil the more positive things will happen in the church. Beloved, in the name of Jesus Christ, I ask you, don't give up. Love each other and walk in truth. I believe, the Lord Holy Spirit will show you many marvelous things wondering you with your growing in understanding, faith, love and in number.

Beloved peace be with you always.

Amen.