

Pentecost sermon 2007 (extract)

**Chief Apostle Wilhelm Leber:**

My dearly beloved Brothers and Sisters, dear guests, I would like to wish each and every one of you a blessed feast of Pentecost. May the fullness of God's blessing flow today, and may everyone particularly experience God's love and kindness. This applies to the many who are present here in Hamburg, but also to all those who are now hearing this word, and finally to all Brothers and Sisters throughout the world.

I wish to extend a special word of greeting to the congregation: "**Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.**" (John 14:1)

There are so many things which could trouble us, and as God's children we are not spared either. Perhaps there are sicknesses which cause us great worry, or also problems at our workplace. One could be troubled when experiencing certain things in the congregation. Much can be seen on the horizon which certainly touches our soul. As people we could be troubled, and we cannot change this because we are human beings.

But I would like to draw your attention to the fact that it says here: "Let not your heart be troubled." I believe that this formulation was made intentionally. The heart is namely the innermost part of mankind. And then this word means: do not be troubled in your innermost being! And this is certainly important. Deep down we should not be troubled if things occur which cause us to worry. And this is my message: dear Brother, dear Sister, do not be troubled in your innermost being! Let us remain with that which we have recognized and experienced. And the antidote is also described here so that one need not be troubled, namely: "you believe in God, believe also in Me" – in other words, in the Son of God.

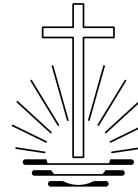
This is of course more than just a general belief in the creator. This would not preserve us in our innermost being, there must be more. And this is our belief in God's leadership. It is necessary to believe in His help and His blessing. Then we need not be troubled.

And if it says here: "believe also in the Lord Jesus", then this certainly means that we are not just aware of tradition, it means that we must believe in the Lord's grace, believe in the redeeming power of the Son of God, and also believe in the promise that He will return to take us unto Himself. We will be preserved if this faith burns within our soul. Nothing could then shake our innermost being that we could no longer see clearly. This is a word we should take along into the future: "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me."

I wish to add in all modesty: let us also believe in the apostle ministry and the activity of the apostles in our time. I do not wish to discuss this further at this point, to prevent the danger from arising that it will be said that the apostle ministry is placed above the Lord Jesus. This is not our intention. But permit me to say that we are an apostolic church and we wish to remain so. That is sufficient on this topic.

Dearly beloved, if we are approached by things which wish to trouble our innermost being, then let us remember this word. Let us use our faith to counteract that which wishes to trouble us.

And now on to our Pentecost word which I read out, and where it says: "**But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.**" (1 Corinthians 6:17). This means that those who entrust themselves to the Lord and wish to be united with Him must also be one in nature with the Lord. Let me again make this our focal point, dear Brothers and Sisters, because this is and will remain our lifelong task, to be one spirit with the Lord, to completely agree in



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our nature with Him. This agreement has so many facets. His life was so versatile, and that which is reported is so stimulating that we can always find new aspects. We never want to stop learning from the Lord and orientating ourselves according to Him. Let me describe a few of the Lord's characteristics so that we can learn from them and also assume such an attitude.

First point: **The Lord always sought the connection to His Father.** And I am convinced that one can say the Son of God was strong in His prayers. We wish to be one spirit with Him, and therefore we also want to be strong in our prayers. The disciples once addressed the Lord and said: 'Lord, teach us to pray'. Why did they do this? I think they noticed that the Lord's prayers radiated a special power. This should also be the effect of our prayers. We want to be strong in our prayers. It is my conviction that one cannot assume the Lord's nature without intensive prayers.

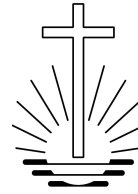
The second point: **The Lord Jesus served with His whole heart.** This readiness to serve became evident in a number of special situations. Once He washed the disciples' feet. This is a special sign of serving. One must even say that this is more than the normal amount. Even the disciples were astonished and argued: 'Lord, are You washing my feet?' But the Son of God said that He had to wash their feet. We wish to be one spirit with the Lord. Do we not therefore wish to show a readiness to serve which is beyond the normal amount? If everyone has this intention in the future, don't you think this will result in a strong accent around the globe? This will have an effect on the Lord's congregation.

A third point: **The Lord Jesus approached everyone, He never rejected anyone.** One event fascinated me, as written in the gospel of Mark. There we can read: He took a child, set it into the midst of the disciples, and took it into His arms. What a wonderful gesture! We want to be one spirit with the Lord, and I wish to therefore make a few conclusions. Could we not also place a child into the middle? Or the youth? They should feel that they are part of the congregation. Do we not wish to make this quite clear? I ask you to do this in the congregations.

And if a rector should ask how this is to be carried out, then I simply say: consult your Sunday school teachers and consider how this can be implemented. The Lord Jesus did not set this example for nothing. It certainly does not say that He took a particularly loving child or one which had done something special. He took a child, placed it in the middle, and embraced it. All those who perhaps feel that they are on the border of the fellowship should be taken into the middle. Let us take our senior members, our sick brethren, our handicapped, into the middle. This is what it means to approach everyone, and this is being one spirit with the Lord.

May I add another point in this direction? The Lord Jesus never caused offence. He always remained objective during a dialog. Well, one could certainly say we also do this in the normal case. But I receive letters, and one can also read discussions on the Internet. And I think that these do not always indicate mutual respect and friendliness. Sometimes even aggressiveness can be felt. We wish to be one spirit with the Lord. Dearly beloved, let us make an effort to be revealed as children of the Almighty.

I recently read something which I wish to read out to you because I was touched by it. It comes from a recently published book written by the pope. In his foreword he wrote something which I can only underline:



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*"Everyone has the right to contradict me. But I ask the readers to apply the degree of respect without which understanding is impossible."*

My dear Brothers and Sisters, what is written here is true. If there is no respect, no goodwill, then there is no understanding either. Neither can a bridge be found. Do we want to treat each other like this? I implore that we always encounter each other in friendliness and objectiveness. Of course it could occasionally be the case that one has a different opinion, and that criticism is expressed. But if this is reasonable and objective, one can also approach me in this manner – but, dear Brothers and Sisters, in one spirit with the Lord. We want to encounter each other accordingly and not make a contribution to the destruction of bridges. Therefore: let us deal objectively, pleasantly and sensibly with each other!

Let me mention one final point: the Lord approached everyone, He excluded no one. Even those who were notorious sinners – He also associated with them. He did not distance himself from them. This is what I wish for in the congregations: that we encounter each other in love, that we approach one another, and that no one must feel excluded.

The question could well arise: how can this function in practice, how can it be implemented? I wish to mention that today is the feast of the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit is active, one is motivated to be one spirit with the Lord. There is a nice word in the book of Jeremiah which makes this clear. There it is written, with a view into the future: "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts." Dearly beloved, this is what has happened through the rebirth of water and spirit. And this should be permitted to develop. The divine law of love has been placed into us. This means that our will should agree with the divine will. However, we sometimes have to establish that we are far away from this state; but it is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. If we provide space for this Spirit, if we really endeavour to be one mind with the Lord, a part of our perfection will become visible.

May this penetrate every soul, and may everyone work with it through the power of the Holy Spirit. One spirit with the Lord! Then we will also be found worthy on the day of the Lord, and inherit His glory.

Amen!