

6/6/2021

Acts 2:8 & 11b-18

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?...we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." 14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy..

Pentecost: Speaking in Tongues

Over the last couple weeks we have been studying this passage together and coming to understand the signs of God's Holy Spirit's arrival upon the earliest followers of Jesus. Two weeks ago we looked at the symbol of **wind** and last week we took some time to understand the significance of the **symbol of fire** in regards to God's holy presence. If you

missed either of those messages, remember you can always go to YouTube to watch the recordings of the past month's services.

But this week we are going to focus on the part of the story that can seem to be the most mysterious part, but also the coolest part of the Pentecost story: how the believers began to **speak in tongues**.

To better understand the scripture reading we just heard, it's helpful to understand why there were so many people who spoke different languages together in one place. Did you know that Pentecost was first a special holy day to the Jewish people before it became a special day to Christians? There were three great Jewish festivals that Jewish people around should travel to Jerusalem to celebrate, if able. Those three festivals were Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. These festivals were times to remember and celebrate what God did for them, His people. The feast of Passover is when Jews remember and celebrate God's gift of freedom to them when he brought them out of slavery under the Egyptians. And Passover, for the Christian, is the night on which Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and crucified on a cross – it is the night that Jesus, the spotless, sinless, lamb of God, sacrificed his life for the sake of the world. And then 2 mornings later, Jesus arose from the dead, declaring that

death no longer has the victory for those who follow Jesus. Passover, for Christians has become the celebration of Good Friday and Easter Sunday – the special, holy days when we celebrate how, through Jesus, we are rescued from the power of sin and death and offered eternal life. The Jewish people's story of rescue from the Egyptian Pharaoh becomes widened into the story of all who call on the name of the Lord and believe in Jesus Christ.

But this second special holy day that the Jewish people would travel to Jerusalem for – the festival of Pentecost – what was that all about? The word Pentecost comes from the Greek word "Pentekoste" which means fiftieth. And it has this name because the festival of Pentecost comes 50 days after the festival of the Passover. And during the festival of Pentecost, the Jewish people remembered and celebrated when God gave Moses the law – the 10 commandments on Mt. Sinai – for the people to learn and follow to live into their new identity of being God's people.

Hundreds of years after God gave Moses the law on Mt. Sinai, the streets of Jerusalem were flooded with Jews from all sorts of different places in the Middle East and the Mediterranean for the festival of Pentecost. And as our scripture describes, something amazing happens to

those first followers of Jesus who were praying and waiting for 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven.

The wind, the sign of God's creative power and life-giving Spirit, and fire, the symbol of God's very presence came among the believers AND THEN God's power and presence enabled the Christians to speak in different tongues than their own. God's spirit enabled them to share the Good news about Jesus to the Jewish people from all over the Mediterranean and Middle East who had come to visit Jerusalem for their special day of Pentecost. **The scripture from Acts 2 says,** ⁵ "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

These Jewish people from around the world were able to hear the good news about their Savior Jesus without the barrier of language. God's Spirit enabled his followers to speak the languages of the people from around the world who didn't know about Jesus yet in order for them to know that their long-awaited Messiah, had finally come.

Are there people in your life – family, friends, coworkers, neighbors – who don't know about the Good News of Jesus yet? I know I do. Do you pray for them? That's such a good and important thing to do. Praying for people to come to know Jesus is oftentimes where it all starts. I am certain that for every person here today, there were people behind the scenes praying for you to come to know and believe in Jesus – maybe you know who some of those people were – maybe there are people who you'll only meet in heaven who prayed for you. And so as all of us were prayed for, it's so important for us to pray for those who don't know Jesus yet.

And also...there comes a point for every person that they must HEAR the good news spoken to them. Praying for the other person to come to believe in Jesus is important and necessary, but our scripture teaches us today that people need to have the gospel spoken to them *in their own language*.

Praying for our friends and family who aren't believers to come to know Christ is important, but what if that is only half of our task as Christians? What if the other part is knowing *how* to communicate the gospel story to them in their own language – in a way that they will understand and hopefully be captivated by. Maybe this Pentecost story in the Book of Acts is teaching us the importance of what we say to those around us. Maybe the account of the first Pentecost is meant to inspire us to not only pray for others to come to know Jesus, but also to pray for ourselves - for supernatural knowledge that helps *us* communicate the gospel to people in our lives in their own language.

In a few moments we'll be partaking in communion and as we think about the table, as if this were a big banquet table, imagine that there are empty seats waiting for the people in your life who don't believe in Jesus yet. Their names are written on the place cards – the table is set and the meal is prepared. As you come forward for communion this morning, I invite you to be visualizing those empty chairs meant for your family and friends, and ask God to send his spirit into your heart and mind to know how to share the gospel to them in their own language.

BLESS COMMUNION ELEMENTS