

SERMON FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY

MAY 31, 2020

TEXT: ACTS 2: 1-21 (selected verses)

THEME: THE LANGUAGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

And when the day of Pentecost was come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like the rushing of a violent wind, and all the house where they were was full of it. And they saw tongues, like flames of fire, coming to rest on everyone of them. And they were all full of the Holy Spirit, and were talking in different languages, as the Spirit gave them power. **6** And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. **12** And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

In the name of Jesus:

There is a question that I have been asked by many people over the past couple of weeks. The question is this: "Pastor, when will the church be open again so that we can worship together?" God be praised, and God willing, it will happen next week, June 7, where we will be able to gather together again as the family of God to give Him the praise and glory that He alone deserves, and to be fed by Him in the Sacrament and listen to His Word as He speaks to us in the Holy Scriptures. I am looking forward to being together again.

Today, on Pentecost, our text, Acts 2, speaks of another gathering together. The disciples were gathered together in one place. Suddenly, a sound of a violent wind shook the place, so much so that the house was full of this violent wind. God was doing something special, and He was getting the disciples' attention. Now that God had their attention, they looked and saw tongues of fire appearing on them, these tongues of fire appeared to look like flames of fire. God spoke to His people in the Old Testament in the midst of a fire such as the burning bush, and now He was doing something spectacular with flames of fire here on Pentecost. The Scriptures say that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they were doing something utterly amazing, they were speaking in different languages as the Spirit gave them the power to do so.

These other languages, called the gift of tongues, was the ability of those who had the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to speak in other languages the language of the Holy Spirit so that people from other countries could understand what God the Holy Spirit was saying through these disciples, without having any previous ability to do so.

To understand what took place, it would be like you having the ability to speak German, Japanese, Spanish, and other such languages without having

ever taken a class to learn how to speak the language. And in speaking this foreign language, you would be able to do so in a way that could be understood by anyone who spoke in the native tongue.

That is why the book of Acts records that: “And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. **7** And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?” This is the miracle of Pentecost, that the Holy Spirit was speaking His language, His Word, to sinners in their own native tongue!

But what was the message that was being shared, what was being communicated? The Apostle Peter explained in his sermon: “ it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.. But how can anyone be saved? Peter goes on to explain: “ “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

What God was doing on Pentecost was a great reversal of what took place centuries before. There was a time when everyone spoke the same language. They wanted to make a name for themselves, so they built a tower, a monument to themselves. At this place, where they would build this tower, they would stay, in direct defiance of God's command to be "fruitful, multiply, and **fill the earth.**" They were arrogant, took pride in their achievements, and essentially were telling God that no one, not even God Himself, would tell them what to do!

So what did God do: The Lord said: "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. **7** Come, let us go down and confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." **8** So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. **9** Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth." (Genesis 11).

Man was now not only alienated from God because of their pride and arrogance,, they were now also separated by language from one another. And

so the human race spread out from that place and fulfilled God's command to fill the earth. The Lord was not joking, His original command was now going to be fulfilled.

Mankind has continually rejected God's authority. We are each conceived in sin. Jesus says that from the heart flows all sorts of sin: "For what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. **19** For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander." Sin is no laughing matter, sin kills, for the price you pay for being a sinner, separated and alienated from God, is death.

But God wills that all be saved and come to know the truth. This is why Peter preaches on Pentecost: "(that) Jesus (was) delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, crucified and killed (but) **24** God raised him up, (so that you would) know certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ." For there is no other name under heaven by which man can be saved, except by believing in Jesus Christ.

This message about salvation by God's grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ is the language and the message of the Holy Spirit. It is the language and message that was shared on that first Pentecost, and it is the message that

you hear today. Jesus foretold about the work of the Holy Spirit when He said: “the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14). When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. **14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. **15** All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (John 16).

This then is the language, the message of the Holy Spirit, to speak to your heart and show you that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But God’s Good News is this: God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son and that by believing in Jesus you have eternal life. The Holy Spirit is at work, He is always at work to point you to Jesus, His work is to give you faith in Jesus. For no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12). It is just as we confess in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed: “ I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept

me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.” And so the Holy Spirit speaks His language of love in Jesus Christ today to you! For you have been baptized into Christ and now belong to Him. He speaks to you through the Word, clearly showing you your sinfulness and a need for a Savior, and then shows you that Jesus is your Savior.

Some years ago there was a movie version of Robin Hood which had the lead actor played by the American Kevin Costner. The same year another version of Robin Hood came out starring the Irish actor by the name of Patrick Bergin in the lead role. Someone said that movie that had the actor with the British accent was actually the real version of Robin Hood. But consider this, the real Robin Hood lived around 1196 AD, and his king, Richard the Lionhearted, didn't even speak English! And furthermore, the English that the real Robin Hood spoke was so different from the English that is spoken today, that we would not be able to understand it. If the movie director had instructed the actor to use the actual English used by the real Robin Hood, we would have needed subtitles in order to understand the dialogue!

What we prefer in movies are movies that communicate with us in our own language. And that is why the Holy Spirit did at Pentecost, and continues to do today. He speaks to us in His own way in our own language the love of Christ, who lived, died and rose for us, so that by believing in Jesus, we and others might have life by His name.

Amen