

Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.**



Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,

Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

“In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,

blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Sermon

It's a beautiful story, this tale of Pentecost. It paints the picture of such harmony that God's Holy Spirit creates between people of different backgrounds and languages, countries and races. But, it makes me wonder, what that city of Jerusalem looked like before those tongues of fire appeared over the heads of the disciples.

- I have to imagine a lot of awkward games of charades, when someone tried to act out what they needed to borrow from their neighbor.
- I have to imagine that there was an awful lot of yelling at each other in the market place - as people tried to get someone who spoke another language to understand the price was of the food they had to sell.
- I imagine fear and confusion, frustration and anger. I imagine unfair judgments and stereotypes arising. I imagine people separating from each other, just to avoid all the chaos that not speaking the same language can bring.



And then, all of a sudden, this violent wind blows through town and shakes things up. The scripture says it fills the house where the disciples were staying and when they go out into the public square, it begins to translate for them as they speak of all that God is doing. It begins to connect them with the neighbors, who just that morning, felt so far away and disconnected from them. It begins to reconcile strangers and build God's church.

Living in Aurora, our everyday experience is probably a little more like the "before" picture of Jerusalem, than the "after" picture when that Holy Spirit blows through. The Aurora school system says that last year they served students from more than 130 countries who spoke more than 160 languages. (Remember, when I was reading the scripture, how long it took me to name off all the places where people had gathered in Jerusalem from - that was only 15 different places named. I'm just glad that Acts didn't make me read off the names of all the places people come to Aurora from, I'm sure I mis-pronounced enough as it was!)

- We will have days when we struggle to understand each others' words and customs.

- There will be times when we will get frustrated with each other.
- We will be tempted to draw back from all the chaos of our city, to close our doors, and associate only with the people who are just like us.

But we are Christian People. And God didn't call us to the easy way out. No, we trust that the flame that rested on the heads of those disciples in Jerusalem, that gave them words to speak to their neighbor, It still burns today - and I see it in you. I see that Holy Spirit living in this church. And I am so grateful for all that we get to share with our neighbors and all they share with us. I am so grateful for Swahili and Spanish for Tea from Kenya and Coffee from Mexico. I am grateful for people, who help open our eyes to all that God has made. Who challenge us to be better than we have been. Who give us new visions of what might yet be. I am grateful for the African-American church tradition that digs down deep to feel the way God's Spirit is moving and responds with joyous praise and a passion for freedom and justice and truth. I am so grateful for the people and the cultures that God is calling into this family here at First Aurora. Because, isn't the story of Pentecost the story of our church and the city that God has called us to serve? A place where people from all over the world come together. A place where we join together as one family in Christ. A place where we do the hard work of sharing and reconciliation, remaining committed to our brothers and sisters in Christ, praying for one another and striving to understand, no matter how difficult it may be.

But, as grateful as I may be for all of this, I am more grateful still for the One who makes it possible. For that Great Translator who helps us understand each other, and who roots our feet to the ground when we don't, so that we can't just walk

away. I am grateful for the way that Spirit holds us together and gives us voice to proclaim the great work that God is doing amongst us. I give thanks for the dreams and visions that Holy Spirit inspires and the encouragement it gives to follow up until we make them real.

In this church, we talk the talk of Pentecost. We strive to live it out together, and I pray, that we can carry that Pentecost Spirit out into the rest of our chaotic but beloved community, because the Spirit of Pentecost is a gift worth sharing and a blessing the world desperately needs.

Amen.

Prayers of The People & The Lord's Prayer

God who blows into the world on the breath of the Holy Spirit,

You were there at the beginning of creation. It was your Spirit that moved over the waters of chaos and disorder. It was your Word who spoke so that there might be order and purpose and meaning in this world. It was your breath that was blown into the mud of the earth, creating women and men as partners meant to share the garden in harmony.

Yet even there in that garden, we broke your harmony. We reached out for what was not good for us. We ate the fruit of a false knowledge. We followed the lies of the one who told us that we could take what we wanted. Brothers argued amongst themselves, not trusting that you had love enough for all. We claimed that some were better than others in your perfect creation. And still, too often, our actions or inactions make the claim that we know better than the God who made

us, distorting your holy scriptures, disobeying Christ's holy command to Love one Another, going our own way, willing to leave everyone else in the dust.

So let us not be a people who simply cry out Peace! Peace! When there is no peace. But let this Holy Fire of your Eternal Spirit burn in us until it moves us to act for justice and equality and mutual love that respects all the people that God has made. And let that love reach out first to those who have lived for too long without justice. Let us create peaceful pathways toward justice, so that there is a way other than violence, to get to where God is calling us. And let us find that place someday, where people of different races and backgrounds can respect and trust one another as the family. Where no one will ever need to fear for the loss of their life at the hand of another. But, rather, we can see each other and hear each other as another beloved member of your creation. Let us lift up those who have been oppressed and pushed down, no matter what it costs us, because we know that none of us will breathe free until all of us can breathe the freedom that you desire, that none of us will live in the fullness of your great peace until true justice can pour down over everyone who you gave life. No matter the language they speak, the color of their skin, or the places that they have been.



Hear our prayers, O Lord, and let your Spirit move in us until all our lives are a prayer that cries out for justice, for equality, and for your love to rule.

And until we find that Kingdom you promised, until we return to that harmony you first gave us, we will continue to pray the way Christ taught us, saying:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

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