

The Spirit Brings Speech

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Trinitarian Congregational Church
Pentecost Sunday
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Acts 2:1-21

Pentecost was a Jewish festival that was held 50 days after Passover. It was known as the Festival of Weeks that gave thanks for the first harvest of wheat in ancient times. It also celebrated and remembered the giving of the 10 Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It was a required festival for all those living within 20 miles of Jerusalem, but attended by Jews from all over the Middle Eastern world. So Pentecost was held yearly for the Jews. When we speak of Pentecost, we're talking about this particular celebration of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2. It changed everything. Let's take a look.

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.'

You know, every so often in the course of human history there comes a day that changes everything.

July 4, 1776 was one of those days - the birth of our nation.

September 11, 2001 was also a day that changed everything.

June 6, 1944 was another one of those days - D-Day, the decisive invasion of W.W.II that turned the tide - it began with one day.

There are other days that changed the course of history as well.

April 15, 1974 - the birth of Tim Thomas, Boston Bruins goalie.

Aug. 3, 1977 - the birth of Tom Brady.

In our faith, there are big days as well, days that change everything. The day the Israelites escaped Egypt walking on dry ground through the Red Sea. The day Moses received the Ten Commandments from God. The day or

night when Christ was born. The day he began his public ministry and started with those words, "Come, follow me." Think of how those words changed the lives of those first disciples. 3 little words changed their lives forever. Of course there are other big days in our faith - the day the Sermon on the Mount was given, and the day we now call Good Friday, and of course, Easter Sunday.

You may or may not realize that Pentecost, the day we mark today, is one of the biggest days in our faith. In the 4000 years of recorded Biblical history, Pentecost is on the short list of most important days - Because it changed everything. Ever since Pentecost God is now available to all.

In the Old Testament, God seemed only available to a select few - prophets, priests & kings. Only they had access to Almighty God, and even then it was only on special occasions - such as on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple, the most sacred place on the face of the earth, and he'd offer a sacrifice and commune with God. Special person, special place, special time. Pentecost is the undoing of all that.

"I will pour out my spirit upon all people - young & old, men and women, people from all over the world shall know my name. I will put my Spirit within them." That's Pentecost. It changed everything.

I've always liked the illustration of the Satellite Dish before. In the Old Testament it was like only a few special people had The Dish, and they would tune in to see what God was up to, and then they'd tell the people about it.

- what's God like?
- what is God's will for us?
- what's it like to experience God?
- to be filled with the power of God?
- to know Divine companionship and spiritual intimacy?

That's what was playing on Satellite TV but only a few had the technology to tune in. Well, because of Pentecost - everyone now gets a Satellite Dish. Everyone can tune in to God and feel the power!

Max Lucado tells the story of a father who had to take a job in another

city. He then commuted back and forth on weekends for what seemed like a very long month. One evening he called to talk with his 3 year old and tell him goodnight. But his son refused to get on the phone and talk. "I don't want Daddy's voice," he said, "I want him!"

For many centuries all God's people got was a voice. That voice came through messengers, teachers - prophets, priests and kings. At Pentecost all the people received God through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I want to highlight just one thing about the impact of the Spirit - what the Spirit brings to Christ followers. There's a long list of what the Holy Spirit brings to us - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness and self control (the "Fruits of the Spirit"), intimacy with God, divine power and more.

But one of the things that stands out on the original day of Pentecost is that the Spirit gives the courage and ability to communicate the Gospel, to speak about the Good News of God.

Vs. 4 "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability."

Fishermen became preachers. Peter went from denying he ever knew Jesus to preaching the first sermon of the Christian Church. And this supernatural ability to speak in other languages enabled the international folks who were gathered there to understand the message of Jesus the Messiah. "They could each understand in their own language."

When the Spirit gets a hold of people, they just have to tell someone about it, and as they open their mouths God gives them the ability to communicate.

I have received the Spirit of Hockey. I can't stop talking about it. I see someone in line at the super market, if they're wearing anything Bruins, I start talking about the games. The Spirit of hockey has gotten a hold of me. When the Spirit of God gets a hold of us the same thing happens.

Pastor Bill Thomas is one of my mentors who taught me a great deal about being a pastor. Bill entered seminary at age 44. During his first year at

seminary he was sent to preach at a little country church. He had always feared public speaking and preaching. And sure enough before the service started Bill had a severe panic attack. He went outside and prayed, "God, you picked the wrong person. You've got the wrong guy. I can't do this." And suddenly warmth and heat came over his entire body from head to toe. God drew near and filled Bill with the Holy Spirit. God confirmed Bill's calling, but he did more than that - God gave Bill the ability to preach and teach and communicate the faith for these past 46 years. Bill recently received the distinguished alumni award from Lancaster Theological Seminary. He still leads worship, preaches from time to time, visits folks in the hospital, and conducts many funerals. The Holy Spirit truly gave him the ability to communicate the Gospel.

May the Holy Spirit give each of us that ability as well.

- to talk about our faith (we've talking about not imposing our faith but rather exposing our faith to others)
- to invite our friends to church
- to be able to teach the faith to our children
- to be able to speak about what God means to us.

May the Holy Spirit give us speech as well.

Think about it.