

King of Glory Lutheran Church
May 30/31, 2020
Year A: Pentecost: John 20:19-23
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1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

3b And no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Acts 2:1-21

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 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. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. 5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

14 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. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 "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. 18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20

The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. 21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

John 20:19-23

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

We are moving into a new season. Can you feel it? In this particular month of May here on the front range of Colorado we have experienced powerful wind, thunderstorms, hail, rain and warm sunny days. I have been struck in these past weeks at the power of the wind and rain. The weather has reminded me that this is a wildly unpredictable time of year. And it feels as though something new is being swept into our lives.

It seems fitting to me as we celebrate Pentecost that we have strong winds blowing things around and making us wonder what is going to happen next in these days. Not that different from the first disciples we hear of today in the book of Acts.

Of course it is not only the wind that is making our lives unpredictable these days. None of us know what the days and weeks and months ahead of us will bring. Some people are slowly beginning to leave home and are seeking ways to safely gather to eat, shop, work, and play while some of us need to continue to stay home to be safe. Wherever we find ourselves, we are all caught up in a kind of storm, a pandemic storm, that has enveloped our world.

There are a wide variety of opinions about how individuals and communities should proceed during this pandemic. Some people continue to sew masks for health care workers in need of PPE. Some protest at being asked to wear a mask in public and ask questions about authority and personal freedom. Some people are forced to work in contact with many people in order to keep their job and pay their bills. Others are isolated at home. All of us are faced with decisions about how much risk we face if we go to the doctor, buy groceries, or visit family and friends.

Our King of Glory community and faith communities around the world have found new ways to worship and grow in faith and serve our neighbors while longing for the ability to gather in a familiar place with our Christian community and sing together, receive the gift of Holy Communion, and share a hug or handshake. Opinions differ about when and how we should gather physically in church buildings.

Just like you, I am faced with all of these tensions and decisions. And I continue to seek wisdom from God, from the Bible, from colleagues and scientists and elected officials. As we celebrate Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, and the variety of ways the Spirit speaks to us and empowers us I have found the words of David Lose, preacher and theologian, helpful this week. He writes that, “communities gathered in the name of Christ do not all look the same, do not face the same challenges (even during a pandemic), have different resources, and will come to different decisions. Yet in spite of all these differences, we remain united as the people of God, called, equipped, sanctified, and sent to bear witness to God’s love for the world through both our words and actions.”

From the very beginning the Christian church has been rich in diversity and spiritual gifts as we are reminded today in the book of Acts.

After Jesus’ ascension to heaven, the disciples were hanging out together, hunkered down at home, praying for the Holy Spirit to come as Jesus promised. And on this day, the fiftieth day after Passover, which the Jews called Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and filled all the apostles.

According to Jewish tradition Pentecost was a celebration of the first fruits of the harvest and a celebration of the gift of God’s law and covenant. Jews from all over the world gathered together in Jerusalem for the festival.

In Jerusalem it wasn’t unusual to hear many different languages and see people from all over the world. Jerusalem was an international city then much like it is today. What wasn’t expected was to hear God’s word proclaimed in your own language when you were far away from home.

On this Pentecost the Holy Spirit did something that no one expected. By the power of the Holy Spirit the story of God’s power and God’s works were communicated in every language so that everyone could understand. God reached out to the people in the language they understood. And suddenly those people began to see and know and understand God in a way that they hadn’t before.

This is the power of our creative and living God. Our God who speaks through a variety of traditions and languages. Our God who reveals power and love in infinite ways, experiences and people. Our God who is not bound by buildings or pandemics.

As we celebrate this Pentecost we mark the birthday of the church and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that blew through Jerusalem and moved the disciples to share with others God’s wonderful act of saving love through Jesus. The Holy Spirit that has moved through the church from generation to generation. The Holy Spirit that is at work through you and me today.

We see today that the Holy Spirit does not make us all the same or erase every difference of opinion or experience. And yet, we also see today that the Holy Spirit calls us to serve the same God and join in God's mission using a variety of gifts.

In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul speaks to people who have different opinions and are wrestling with difficult decisions about how to live their lives. And he says to them, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

God created each one of us and gave us unique and varied gifts. We are not meant to do the same things or make all the same decisions or share the same opinions. And yet, we are all created by the same God who loves us and wants us to share that love for the sake of the world.

For as much as it shakes us up and surprises us, God's Holy Spirit is a gift. A gift that lives in us, teaches us, comforts us and guides us into the unknown.

As we hear the story of this day in the book of Acts, we hear how all the people heard God's good news for them in their own language. The Spirit was at work giving people a variety of languages and words and expressions so that all would know God.

So on this Pentecost, during these strange pandemic days, how will the Holy Spirit work through us to speak to people in our own time and place in a language that each person can understand? How will we use the variety of gifts God has given us to share God's good news for the sake of the world?

As those first disciples did, we begin by praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We ask God to come to us and to guide us. We ask for compassion and patience with those we disagree with or do not understand. We ask for help as we make difficult decisions. We ask to learn a new language so that we can share God's healing message of love for our world today.

Even as we pray for the Holy Spirit to come, that Holy Spirit already lives in you and has given you a language that someone else will recognize and understand. A language of kindness, of compassion, of generosity. A language of service, or poetry, or music. A language of the young or a language of the old. Whatever it is, you have been given a gift by the Holy Spirit to share God's love even, and maybe especially, during this pandemic.

So on this Pentecost we give thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit that breathed life into the church. And we commit our lives to being God's people, working for the common good, sharing God's love in all the many and infinite languages God has given us.

Amen.