

**Acts 2:1-21, Ps. 104  
Romans 8:14-17  
John 14:8-27**

**Sermon  
By  
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**Day of Pentecost  
June 5, 2022  
St. John, Flat Rock**

**“When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples 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 . . . And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each . . . Parthians, Medes, Elamites [French, English, Sudanese, Argentinians, Cubans, Ukrainians, and residents of Taiwan].”**

As a young Boy Scout, I had the opportunity to travel with my scout troop to New York City to see the sights and attend the World’s Fair. Talk about a culture shock! Going from Tuscaloosa, Alabama to New York City I could just as well have been in OZ, or on a different planet. There were unique smells, incredible sights, strange languages, new fashions, enticing foods, and a cacophony of noises in the city. At the World’s Fair, I saw amazing artifacts from the past, exciting exhibits of present life from all over the world, and what seemed like improbable prototypes for a future I could not comprehend. But one experience that really intrigued me on that trip was visiting the United Nations. When given a tour of the great hall where representatives from all the nations gathered, we learned that at every seat there was a set of headphones through which each representative could hear what was being said translated into his or her own language. How cool was that! It seemed miraculous to me at the time, long

before there were apps for our smart phones that can readily translate for any one of us.

It all made sense, I had just not thought about it too much before. In order to have a conversation, discussion, a dialogue; in order to reach agreements and pass resolutions; and in order to work together in peace and address the needs of the world, people had to be able to understand one another. For the United Nations, it was headphones with translators that made this possible. For the early church, well, it was the Holy Spirit.

It is no accident that the Church's celebration of Pentecost coincides with that of the Jewish faith. Until the temple's destruction by the Romans in 70 AD, Jews from all around the Mediterranean made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Spring Harvest Festival, or Feast of Weeks, which occurred fifty days after Passover. As faithful Jews, Jesus and his disciples would be counted among those representing different cultures and speaking different languages, not unlike today's representatives at the UN or visitors to a world's fair. But without the Holy Spirit descending upon them after Jesus' death and resurrection, the first followers of Jesus Christ might have locked themselves in a room indefinitely, cut off from the world, wondering what to do next, or they may have gone back to their ordinary day-to-day business as before, casting nets for fish in the sea, collecting taxes, or learning the trade of their father.

We learn in John's gospel, after the Last Supper and prior to Pentecost the disciples were given a heads up, a warning of things to come and hope for the future. Jesus, in what is called his "Farewell Discourse," said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son . . . If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you . . . Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

Then on the Day of Pentecost, with this foreknowledge planted in their minds, the disciples were stirred by the Holy Spirit to speak. The miracle for all those gathered was that people from around the whole known world could listen in through the headphones of the Spirit and understand what the disciples from Galilee were saying. They could hear the Good News being proclaimed. This Pentecost event gave evidence that the Word of God, the teachings of Christ, was never intended to be exclusive - the privilege of one group of people, of one culture, who spoke one particular language, and resided in one single place. Since that day, it is no accident that the Bible, as it has come to be written, has been translated into roughly 636 languages, and the New Testament itself into 1442 languages! This is many more languages than those

represented on that first Pentecost, many more than are represented at the United Nations.

On that Day of Pentecost, the church was born - the followers of Christ became a new creation, many peoples knit together into the body of Christ on earth, with a mission to the world. And as we hear in today's collect, "on this day [Almighty God] opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of [the] Holy Spirit."

But isn't it odd that the Holy Spirit is the most neglected and least understood person of the Holy Trinity in our church today? We are familiar with seeing God as our creator, the maker of all heaven and earth. As the psalmist writes: "O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures."

Here in Western North Carolina we do not have to go far from our front doors to marvel at God's creation. Similarly, we have little problem relating to God the Son, who lived as we live and died as we will die, yet without sin. But the Holy Spirit is another matter. How many of us have truly experienced the Holy Spirit working in our lives? Yet without the Holy Spirit, we would not truly know God at all.

It was through the Holy Spirit that God created the world and breathed life into us. It is through the Holy Spirit that God awakens our soul. And as Paul noted in his letter to the Romans, "All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God . . . When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of

God, and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ . . .” The gift of the Spirit is not a gift for any one of us alone; it is not a gift for the church alone; it is a missionary gift, a gift that enables us to not only know our maker, but to go and be bearers of forgiveness, bearers of peace, and bearers of God’s love to the world.

As one writer puts it, “God has not raised all of us up, gone through this extraordinary ordeal [of the incarnation], sent his Holy Spirit so that we might figure out how to keep the lights on in an empty church.” We are commissioned and empowered by the Spirit to be sent forth as the presence of Christ in a diverse and multi-lingual world, trusting that the Spirit will translate the Good News for us.

But first we must seek to know who we are, know what our mission is, and recognize the Holy Spirit working in our lives. This Day of Pentecost is a very good time to begin. Let us put on the headphones of the Spirit and enter into dialogue with God in Christ, with one another, and discover the oneness we are meant to share. May we experience the peace that comes from that oneness, knowing that the walls of sin no longer need separate us. Then let us discern the gifts we are given by the Holy Spirit, claim them, and accept the commission we are given to be God’s messengers and Christ’s presence, not just inside the walls of the church, but far, far beyond.

As a part of today’s service, we will renew our Baptismal vows. When we affirm our vows, we affirm our oneness as Christ’s body, our oneness of mind or belief as Christ’s

followers, and our oneness in spirit to serve Christ in the world. More importantly, we will affirm our relationship as brothers and sisters in Christ in which the only language needed and understood is that of love. Love, after all, is the most universal of languages.

Today the Holy Spirit blows among us. Do not let it go by unrecognized. Feel it on your faces, breathe it into your lungs, allow it to sweep you off your feet! It brings something new - new life, new identity, new hope, new direction, and new power to change the world. Serving God as bearers of forgiveness, bearers of peace, and bearers of love, we also serve as bearers of real change - unity to all nations and all people under God in Christ, a miracle that even the United Nations will never achieve on its own, without the power of the Spirit working through it. So, come Holy Spirit, come!