

Speak Up, I Can't Hear You Over All this Disruption

Rev. Michael Blackwood

United Church of Broomfield

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Acts 2:1-21

¹When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place.²Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. ⁴They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

⁵There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. ⁷They were surprised and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them?" ⁸How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!" ¹²They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, "What does this mean?" ¹³Others jeered at them, saying, "They're full of new wine!"

¹⁴Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, "Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! ¹⁵These people aren't drunk, as you suspect; after all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! ¹⁶Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷*In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young will see visions.
Your elders will dream dreams.*

¹⁸*Even upon my servants, men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.*

¹⁹*I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.*

²⁰*The sun will be changed into darkness,
and the moon will be changed into blood,
before the great and spectacular day of the Lord comes.*

²¹*And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* ^[a]

Morena taku whanau whare karakia. [Maori]
Good morning my church family.

Kom ons vergader in die naam van God en vier die koms van die Gees wat ons Pinkster noem. [Afrikaans]

Let us gather in the name of God and celebrate the arrival of the Spirit we call Pentecost.

“Pentecost” designates the 50th day after Passover and has been observed by Jews for more than 3000 years. For Jews it is a Feast Day, usually called “Feast of Weeks” or “Feast of Harvest.” Over time, the Feast of Weeks, morphed into a holiday in which most modern Jews celebrate the day Moses received the Law on Mt. Sinai which they calculated as having been the 50th day after the Exodus.

To Christians, Pentecost refers to the down-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the early church in Jerusalem as recorded in today’s reading from Acts. For us Protestants, it represents many things, but primarily we talk about it as --- la nay-sance du li-gleez [French] --- “the birth of the church.”

This event is described extravagantly with wind, fire, and chaos. This supernatural inbreaking of the divine officially introduces to all of creation, “the Spirit.” Pentecost IS an experience. It is not a denomination; it is not Pentecostalism; it is not the holiness movement; it is not a doctrinal system of beliefs. It is an experience.

It is a disruption of life....

Hoy sentimos el viento bajo nuestras alas
 Hoy la fuente escondida fluye y juega
 Hoy la iglesia respira por fin y canta
 Como cada llama se convierte en una lengua de alabanza.
 Esta es la fiesta del fuego, el aire y el agua.
 Derramado, soplado y encendido en la tierra.
 La tierra misma despierta a su creador
 Y se traslada de la muerte al nacimiento.
 Las palabras correctas llegan hoy en su orden correcto
 Y cada palabra deletrea libertad y liberación
 Hoy el evangelio cruza todas las fronteras
 Todas las lenguas son desatadas por el Príncipe de Paz
 Hoy los perdidos se encuentran en Su traducción.¹

The word! LA PALABRA – The SPIRIT La Espirtu came crashing into the world in colorful, fiery tongues – in violent, frightening winds - into the disciples’ lives, at a precise moment that was vital for them in their time and place.

Confusion ensued as people began to speak languages they didn’t know and hadn’t spoken ever before in their lives. Fear was there as people questioned what was happening. What is this that we’re hearing? It scares me – I don’t like it.

Reflect on your thoughts and feelings as I have spoken in other tongues; some of which are modern and possibly recognizable, and others are not. It’s weird, right. Maybe a little uncomfortable, disconcerting – certainly confusing, definitely a challenge for me. Imagine several people talking in foreign, unknown tongues all at once. The sound escalating as the confusion and fears build up among us – what’s going on? Why is Michael speaking that way? What is he even saying? You look to the person beside you for help and comfort, yet lo-and-behold they begin to speak in some strange language as well.

¹ Pentecost by Malcolm Guite. Translated into Spanish using Google Translate.

As the confusion and fear creeps in, voices rise. Heartbeats escalate. People get loud – and that’s usually not a good thing, right? When people get loud, we hear, “Now everybody just calm down.” But not at Pentecost. People are agitated, “I’m not speaking in a strange language, I’m speaking the language I’ve always spoken and that you’ve always understood. Why can’t YOU understand me – what’s wrong with YOU?!?!?”

A cacophony is an appropriate way to describe the Pentecost “event;” a harsh discordant mixture of sounds. Harsh. Discordant. Disagreeing. A lack of harmony.

So often, the language aren’t understood by all. Or they confuse. That scares us, but also, it scares us when we do understand the language. I hear the words coming out of your mouth - They unsettle and disrupt. They scare me.

We look at Pentecost as a “THEN” event, something that happened to the disciples over two-thousand years ago, but you see that’s wrong. Pentecost isn’t JUST the birth of the church.... Pentecost IS THE SPIRIT disrupting life – THEN and NOW. Pentecost happens all the time. Often the cacophony isn’t another language, but another perspective. A viewpoint that is vastly different or contradictory to all that we know and understand. It’s not that that person is speaking another language, they’re just speaking ***another language...***

- Black lives matter
- White Privilege
- \$15 minimum wage
- White Nationalism
- American Idealism and dominance
- Abortion
- Climate change
- Same-sex marriage
- Transgender high-school sports
- Cancel-culture
- Welfare

These issues are clear, right?

Sometimes we just can’t understand WHY so-and-so believes what they do.

I’ve talked with them, but it’s like talking to a brick wall.

It’s like they’re speaking another language.

Pentecost is a violent, loud, uncomfortable, and disruptive movement in life. It happens in us, on us and all around us AND if we listen, the cacophony becomes clear, and we find our voice.

THAT’S WHAT HAPPENED WITH PETER.

Poor, lovable, can-never-get-it-right, Peter.

In the gospel of Matthew, during a violent, chaotic storm, Jesus said to Peter, “Get out the boat, come to me.” – Peter tries and fearfully cries, “Jesus, save me, I’ll drown.”

In the gospel of John, as Jesus kneels to wash Peter’s feet, Peter protests saying, “You shall NEVER wash my feet.” Jesus corrects him saying, “Unless you let me do this, you have no part with me.”

Also, in the gospel of John, as Jesus prepares for a violent trial, Jesus said to Peter, “You will deny me three times,” but Peter protests vehemently, “NO, even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” - Angrily, Peter screams to the interrogators, “I tell you I do not know the man.”

Now; in the book of Acts, Peter has more experience. He has matured. AND...the Spirit has arrived.

We read that those NOT affected by the Pentecost “phenomenon” try to figure out what exactly is going on. They try to explain it.

- There must be a reason – a logical, scientific, explainable reason that everyone can understand.

Those seeking to understand asked, “What does this mean?”

- Those who didn’t really care or were skeptics, explained it away by saying, “They’re just drunk.”

It’s the exact same thing we do today. When something isn’t logical, can’t be scientifically explained, is deemed antithetical to the Judeo-Christian God, or just goes against OUR WAY OF THINKING we deem it as crazy, abnormal, un-Christian, or we attempt to “explain-it-away.”

- He’s just crazy....No, I mean really...certifiable.
- They’re not a true Christian.
- That’s just un-American
- You don’t know what you’re talking about.
- Well, all I know is that I read it in THE ENQUIRER so it must be true.
- He must be drunk.

Now-a-days, there’s less dialogue and more declarations of, “You’re just wrong.”

In this midst of the confusion, Peter decided to stand aside no longer; he stepped in. The now experienced, mature disciple – witnessing the Spiritual gifts around him, recalls his Jewish scriptures, summons his courage and he takes his stand with the gift of Spirit.... For Jesus told the disciples, “... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Peter finds his voice and preaches! “Heed my words. These people are not drunk. The prophet Joel spoke of such a day as this when God said, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people.’”

In all the chaos and disruption of Pentecost, Peter was able to observe and witness the HOLY disruption at work in the world and there was...

- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Creation
- Hope

All kinds of people were talking in tongues, men AND women, slaves AND masters, religious AND non-religious, all races and nations!

Find your voice.

Speak up like Peter.

Look at what's going on around you.

It's confusing and disruptive

It's frightening and overwhelming

AND the Spirit is raining down on all of us, ALL of humanity like fiery tongues and blowing winds – winds of change...winds of testimony and witness.

You see – that's what Pentecost is! It's not SIMPLY a birthday. It's all of God's children, in a cacophony of languages and voices, describing God's mighty works. When they all started speaking in different languages, that's what they did: described God's mighty works.

So, how do we describe God's mighty works?

Is it sharing how great our God is? YES

Is it honoring, glorifying and singing praises to our God? YES

AND

Pentecost is the power of witnessing – being the hands, feet and VOICE of Jesus.

What are God's mighty works?

The poor and hungry are crying out.

The earth is crying out.

The oppressed and marginalized are crying out.

THEIR voices are being drowned out and muffled by voices of

- greed,
- pride, avarice,
- fame,
- racism, bigotry
- wrath, laziness and lust

As it was millennia ago, in the midst of the cacophony of flames, wind and confusion, Pentecost is upon us. The Covid-19 pandemic which has killed 3.5 MILLION people has been a disruption to the world and life. The pandemics of racism, hunger and poverty are far worse and have been happening far longer.

Don't ignore or "explain-away" what is happening right before your eyes. Look to our ancestors, our evolution, our sacred writings, and our faith. Be bold, find your voice and speak out, for we all have gifts of the disruptive spirit.

We are God's mighty works. As we donate our money, time and talents, we do God's mighty work. As we study white privilege and take action against racial injustices, we do God's mighty work. As we welcome all into our church and share our compassion with our community, we do God's mighty work.

perfecte dilexit pacem cum imperfectione. [Latin]

Perfectly loved, seek peace with your imperfection.

Tanamkan semangat. Cari kejelasan. [Malay]

Embrace the spirit. Seek clarity.

Yay-on-hada - Prophecy.

Sang-sang-hada - Envision.

Kkum - Dream.

No-ay, Mok-sow-lee-lay cha-ja - Find your voice. [Korean]

May we be courageous, may we call on God for help and may we witness the HOLY at work in our world as we are enveloped in fire and wind. Be a disruptive gift.

AMEN