

Sermon Transcript for Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All right, so we have the day of Pentecost. First off, what in the world is a day of Pentecost? I mean, it sounds all fancy and mysterious and strange like this, but Pente is simply 50 in Latin. So it's 50 days following the resurrection of Jesus Christ or technically it was connected to Passover in the Old Testament and was 50 days after the Passover. It's only spoken of Pentecost in the Greek. When the Greek translates to the Hebrew, it comes out Pentecost: 50 days. In the Hebrew, it's the festival of booze. It was a time where all the men of Israel, all Jewish men, were to gather in Jerusalem. This is 50 days after the Passover and it was a gathering and a celebration. It was a time of celebration for the harvest festival. And they were to celebrate the gifts of God given to them.

Also, this is connected, as almost everything is, to the Passover or to the literal events of Egypt in the Passover. So it's described in the Old Testament where 50 days after the actual Passover, they were gathered at the Mount Sinai where God gave them the 10 Commandments. And so they were to celebrate this presence of God 50 days after that Passover event. It was supposed to be a week-long celebration. That's the reason why all of these Jewish people from all different nations were gathered together in Jerusalem at that time. And this is after a period of time when it's called the diaspora, where the Jewish people were basically thrown out of Jerusalem and shoved into all other different nations, because, well, guess what, the Jews were troublesome people. Not only did they grumble and complain against God, they were never satisfied with anybody ruling them except a Jewish King. And so they were constantly fomenting rebellion and were a frustration to anybody who ruled over them.

Eventually, they just took a bunch of people and they just spread them all out throughout the Greek kingdom. These people had been spread out for a few generations now, and many of them, even though they are of Jewish heritage, do not speak Hebrew anymore. It's significant when we get to the point of the disciples speaking in the language of the people, all of these different, that long list of different nationalities that the disciples are speaking, and they're hearing it in their very own mother tongue because this is in direct contrast to what's going on in the temple. In the temple, the ceremonies are going on in Hebrew. And most of the people don't understand Hebrew. So they're there, they know God is working, but all they're hearing is this gibberish to them, which is the Hebrew language, or at best they just have a very passing knowledge of Hebrew. And so, they don't understand, or many of them don't really fully understand what's going on in the temple. They just know that it's supposed to take place at this time.

Then they have these uneducated Galileans, basically, speaking, or at least them hearing, in their very own language. And they're going, "What is going on? This is completely different. This is something new than what was going on before." Now we know that all these different languages were not really necessary actually for the Holy Spirit to communicate because even in the diaspora, there were basically four languages that the Holy Spirit could have used that would have touched everybody: Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Everybody there had a passing knowledge of at least one of those four languages. But God, instead, He blessed all languages, not just the common ones. Basically, He's saying every single person of every single tribe of every single nation that I've ever placed in this world now has the opportunity to hear the blessings of My Word. And so everybody hears in their own mother tongue. And there's something about hearing in your own

mother tongue. I mean, I sort of understand Spanish. If I go to a Spanish worship service, I can get some things out of a Spanish service. But it's nothing like what I get when I hear it in English because that's my native tongue. That's what I grew up with.

It was more than just God making sure everybody understood. It was that they were connected at a very visceral level with their own language. And it's in direct opposition to what we hear in Genesis. Now the reason that God goes down and He's frustrated with the people in Genesis at Babel, the reason that He separates them and causes them to be confused in their languages is because He had told them earlier, "Go and subdue the world. Go and settle, spread yourselves out throughout all the world and use this great and marvelous gift that I've given to you for my glory. Remember the gift that I've given you. You do not need to be afraid of a worldwide flood anymore. I've wiped the world clean. Trust me, believe in me, and go and do what I want you to do. Spread out. Take care of this world, and I will bless you." Instead, what did they do? They gathered together in a crowd and instead of trusting God, they decided to build this tower to reach to God so that they can control it. You might also be thinking we're going to build a tower so that the floodwaters if they come again, we'll be safe. Because they build not only with bricks, but they also use, what does it say? Bitumen or tar pitch, which is what you use on a ship to make sure it's watertight. They very much have the flood in mind. And instead of trusting the Word of God, they're like, you know what? We're going to take matters into our own hands. And we're going to do what we want to do.

And that's what God means when He says there's going to be nothing impossible for them. In other words, they're going to focus completely on themselves. They're going to think that they are the ultimate authority in the world, and they're not going to turn and worship God because they are too self-satisfied. And so God comes down and confuses their languages in the desire that they might then turn to God and trust Him again in a way that they were supposed to. And then He spreads them out throughout the world because that's what He desired for them to do.

In Pentecost, He's sort of wiping out the curse and giving a blessing. In Babel, all languages were spread out and the people were cursed because they could not communicate with each other anymore. And there was division and strife again. In Pentecost, He gathers everybody up and says, "Even though you are part of that dispersal, even though your history is such that you did not trust Me, both national and personal, even through all of that, I will bless all languages. And the Spirit is for all people. And I will come and I will be their Lord.

Now in our Epistle lesson, we quote the book of Acts, and there Peter quotes, Joel. And it's interesting the way Joel starts out. He says, "And in the last days it shall be, God declares." According to Joel, as interpreted by Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, "in the last days" meant from Pentecost on. It's this idea of the last days is outside of creation. It's the eternal life that we have in God. In other words, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit with the Word of God, faith is given to us. And in that faith, we are taken out, well, we're not taken out, but we're moved from the kingdom of this world, which is subject to the rules and laws of life and death. We're taken out of that world and we're moved from the normal seven days of creation. We're moved into that last day, that eighth day that is beyond creation, that will go on for all eternity, that is salvation in Jesus Christ, that is life eternal in the new paradise, in the new heavens, and the new earth that God is building for us. And when the Spirit comes, it is that last day. It's moving us from this regular cycle of the week and the repetition that goes on, and it is moving us into the eighth day into the future, which is now, which is ours because we are God's new creation. We have His Spirit within us and He is our God, and we are His people. He

promises that no matter how far we wander, no matter how far we fall in failing to listen to and obey those 10 words that He gave the Israelites in Mount Sinai, no matter how far afield we go, God always calls us back. He wants us to know Him in our own language and our own tongue and many who heard the Word believed on that day.

I want to finish out with the following couple of verses of Acts. We read through Acts 2: 1-21, but listen to what the following verses say. Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst. As you yourselves know, this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up losing the pangs of death because it was not possible for Him to be held by it." It was not possible for Him to be held by the pangs and the power of death. Nor is it possible for us to be held up and held hostage to the pangs and power of death. We are free. We are Christ. And we are in the last day, the day of our Lord's salvation. The last day is not the fear and tribulation and scariness and all that. At least not for us; not for Christians. The last day is the day of the Lord. It's the day of His returning. We are waiting eagerly for it when every knee will bow and every tongue confess, every language will confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord. And what a glorious and wonderful and mighty sight that will be. We're almost there. We're in the morning or afternoon, or evening. I'm not sure where we are in the day, but it's almost here. So the last day is to be looked forward to with excitement and celebration and joy because the Lord will come and bring us to His kingdom. And we will see it with our own eyes finally, and we will know the glory of God and the peace which surpasses all understanding. Christ is ours. His peace is ours. The pangs of death have no hold on us. Do not be afraid. The Lord is with us now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.