


THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



MAY 28, 2023

UNDERSTOOD

on the linguistic marvel of Pentecost

by Drew Downs

It must have been shocking to be in Jerusalem that day. When, the physical cacophony breaks in and suddenly some hicks from up north are multilingual marvels.

One of the things churches often do for Pentecost is to proclaim this moment in multiple languages, so we can grasp the crazy sound of all of these voices and languages speaking at once. But this betrays the true power of the moment.

People didn't hear all the languages they didn't understand. They improbably heard their own language so *they* could understand. The power of the Pentecost wasn't for the egos of insiders, but to include outsiders as insiders, in *their* language. So the Good News could be understood.

While our method of worship reinforces the convictions of insiders, our work demands we seek to be heard and understood.

PENTECOST

2023

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Pentecost

After seven weeks of Easter, we gather on the fiftieth day, wearing red, to celebrate Pentecost. The day made famous by tongues of fire, rushing wind, and improbable language artistry. And each year, we dream up ways to capture the nature of the spectacle. With banners, readings, or some use of fire.

These images of the event, however, help reveal the nature of it. A moment, not so much about the miraculous disciples, but the miracle of understanding. Spectacles get noticed. But effectively communicating in ways that are understood *keep* attention. And in this moment, making it so the Good News could be understood was the real miracle.

I've always loved Pentecost. Probably because it makes it impossible to take a passive role in it. Most weeks, we can focus on how awesome Jesus is. We can deconstruct his teachings and talk about his intentions. We can speculate—and keep ourselves busy with objective concepts of "right" and "wrong."

But not this week. Jesus has ascended and the ball is in our court. Now the spotlight is on us. Not on our *behavior* or on our *character*, but on the mission we are given. Which is this, as described in the catechism:

"The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love."

With love,
Drew

PENTECOST

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Day of Pentecost

May 28, 2023

Collect

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Acts 2:1-21

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. 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."

PENTECOST

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.'

Reflection

In the Pentecost Event, we are split in focus. Much like in any of the miracles of Jesus. Do we allow ourselves to be awestruck by the miraculous? Or do we focus on the mission?

When we put it that way, the answer becomes quite obvious. And this is, essentially, what Jesus argues in John 6, in the section right before one of the optional gospel readings.

As much as my Anglican conviction wants to say "Why not both?" it also reminds me that the latter informs the former, while the former can ignore the latter.

Better, then, to focus on the mission. To pray and worship, share the Good News, and promote justice, peace, and love.

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