

## Pastor Jon's Pentecost 2022 Sermon (June 5)

Text: Acts 2:1-11

Tom Petty once sang, "The Waiting is the Hardest Part". John Mayer wrote in a more recent song, "We just keep on waiting, waiting on the world to change." What are you waiting for these days? What are you longing to see changed in our world?

There is so much to lament these days, gun violence in places like Uvalde TX, and 12 more shootings with four or more victims in the US over Memorial Day. We still have the war in Ukraine, Covid 19, and issues like inflation.

In our Pentecost story from the book of Acts today, God was doing a new thing in the midst of the happenings of the world. In the midst of the Roman Empire's in your face greed and violence, God gave birth to the church and its mission. We sometimes refer to Pentecost as the birthday of the church.

In Acts 1, Jesus, just before he ascended, gave some specific instructions to the Apostles to wait. He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait... to wait for the promise of the Father... and that they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

Not many days from now? I would be asking Jesus, how many days? What should we do while we are waiting? How will we know when we have the Holy Spirit?

Just so you get the timing of all of this...

After his resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days back on earth, presenting himself alive to many and teaching about the Kingdom of God. It was at the end of these 40 days that he told the apostles to wait... just before he ascended to the right hand of the Father.

Today in church we celebrate Pentecost, which is 50 days after Easter.

They waited 10 days for the promised Holy Spirit. Could you wait that long just based on a promise? We aren't good at waiting, are we? We struggle when our prayers aren't answered right now.

And sure enough, just as advertised, the Holy Spirit showed up in the form of violent wind and tongues of fire.

So, the first take away, is that when God makes a promise, God keeps it. God always keeps God's promises in scripture. We humans make promises too, but we struggle to keep them, don't we? Not so with God.

So, while the apostles were inside the house, the Spirit came like a rush of violent wind. And little flames of fire rested on each person in the room. All people who were gathered were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. I know how hard it was to try to learn some Spanish when we went to Guatemala. Here, God wanted to make sure that everyone gathered in Jerusalem during a Jewish religious festival, would be able to hear the message of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in their own language.

So, the second take away is that God desires to meet people where they are at and communicate in a language they understand. God didn't expect everyone to speak one language. God got rid of this idea in the tower of Babel story, when God scrambled all the languages. But now God is redeeming that moment by embracing all languages and all peoples as something to celebrate. The church needs to continue to learn this lesson of not expecting everyone to conform to our ways... whether through music, worship, social media, or language.

Then, without much notice in scripture, there is a scene change. The disciple's went from being huddled inside to suddenly being thrust outside and sharing the good news of Jesus in multiple languages. People questioned, aren't these Galileans? In other words, uneducated fishermen. What does this mean? Are they drunk?

Then Peter, who didn't have the best track record of following through on promises, got up to preach. Peter the fisherman is now Peter the preacher. His opening line, which I should use in a sermon sometimes is, "We're not drunk, it's only 9:00 in the morning."

But Peter, saw what was happening as a fulfillment of the words spoken through the prophet Joel. That one day the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh where...

Sons and Daughters shall prophecy.

Young Men shall see visions.

Old Men shall dream dreams.

Even male and female slaves will receive the Spirit and prophecy.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Both young men and young women shall speak and be listened to.

Old men can dream again. Slaves, male and female, should be heard as well.

This reminds me of the Apostle Paul's vision for the church in Galatians 3:28 when he says: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

For Paul, all the categories that separate us in the world, should fall away as we consider our oneness in our faith and baptism in Jesus Christ. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. People of great differences were a part of the early church and they had to find ways to gather and embrace each other's differences.

We know June is Pride month in support of the LGBTQIA+ community. This community has been hurt by the church throughout history. I think of my best friend from High School, a devout Christian, Roman Catholic, who recently came out after his parents died. I think of him when I think of the Pentecost story. He is fully welcomed and included in God's Pentecost dream for the church.

Pentecost should challenge us to move out of our neat little boxes and into the world with ears to listen and words and actions to share that demonstrate God's love for all people and all creation.

Amen.