
EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED

Sermon for Pentecost, 2022

Acts 2:1-21

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our First Reading from before, Acts 2:1-21: **When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like a violent blast of wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw tongues that separated, like flames, and one rested on each of them. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.**

⁵ Jews who feared God from every nation under heaven were staying in Jerusalem. ⁶ When that sound occurred, a crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard the disciples speaking in his own native language. ⁷ They were astonished and amazed and asked: “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that everyone of us hears in his own native language, ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people living in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, ¹⁰ people living in Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Jews as well as proselytes, ¹¹ and people from Crete and Arabia? We hear them declaring in our own languages the wonderful works of God.”

¹² They were all amazed and puzzled. They asked one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ Others sneered: “They are full of new wine.”

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: “Men who are Jews and all of you who are living in Jerusalem, understand this and listen closely to what I say! ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. For it is only nine in the morning. ¹⁶ Rather, this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ ‘In the last days, God says, “I shall pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Indeed, even on My male slaves and female slaves I shall pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I shall show wonders in the heaven above and miraculous signs on the earth below: blood, fire and a cloud of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will turn dark, and the moon turn to blood before the coming of the great and splendid day of the Lord, ²¹ and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”’

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It is ironic that on the Day of Pentecost, when there is mention of different languages in the first two readings, that the pastor or lay reader has a mouthful when he reads the Second Lesson from Acts 2! Listen again to the following list of persons and places: **“Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people living in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, ¹⁰ people living in Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Jews as well as proselytes, ¹¹ and people from Crete and Arabia.”** That is a mouthful! It is like the tower of Babel come to life: *“Come! Let Us go down there and confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech!”* (Gen. 11:7). Perhaps the pastor or reader may not even understand his own speech! All those funny and uncommon words: **“Parthians”**; **“Mesopotamia”**; **“Cappadocia”**; **“Phrygia and Pamphilia”**; **“Proselytes.”** Instead of speaking in tongues, the one doing the reading will be busy *untwisting his tongue!* And so, it may be that the person reading the lessons, as well as the people hearing them being read, is **“astonished and amazed,”** and may ask, **“What does this mean?”**

What does this mean? Why does Luke record this long list of persons and places? Let’s find out.

We begin by asking, “Who were all these people? Where did they come from? What were they all doing in Jerusalem? And why on Pentecost?”

Who were all these people? Our text says that they were **“Jews who feared God from every nation under heaven.”** Most of these people were Jews by birth, however, mixed in the crowd were also some Gentiles - that is, non-Jews - who had converted to the Jewish religion. Thus the mention of **“Jews as well as proselytes.”** Proselytes were Gentiles who had become Jews. But all in all, this whole crowd was made up of people who were devoted to the Jewish religion.

That explains why, even though they had come **“from every nation under heaven,”** - why they all were in Jerusalem on this particular day. They were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost precisely because they were devout Jews. Devout Jews would make the trip to Jerusalem and go to the temple on the appointed days they were supposed to be there. There were three major festivals in the Hebrew calendar that called for the people of Israel to be there at the temple. These were the so-called “pilgrimage” festivals: the Feast of Passover, which occurred in the early spring; the Feast of Weeks which occurred fifty days later, in the later spring, and so it was also called “Pentecost,” which means “fifty”; and then, the third major pilgrimage festival, the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, which occurred in autumn. For these three festivals, all Jews were supposed to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and go to the temple.

Making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a significant undertaking even back when all the Jews had lived in the land of Israel itself, but when the Jews became scattered away from Israel, living in far distant lands, the trip to Jerusalem had become more of a big deal. Still, they came. So here they were, thousands of them, making the trek, **“Jews who feared God from every nation under heaven.”**

But how had the Jews become so scattered in the first place? Why were they not all still living in the land the LORD had given them?

Centuries earlier, in 722 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel had fallen to the *Assyrians*, and the Assyrians then dispersed those northern tribes, kicking them out of the land. So off they went in every direction, settling in distant lands, far and wide. Then after the fall of the north, about a century later, around 600 B.C., the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, started deporting the people of Judah, the southern kingdom, taking them off to *Babylon*, far to the east, in Mesopotamia. This was the “Babylonian Captivity.” And even though the Persian king Cyrus issued an edict in 538 B.C., allowing the Judahites to return to Jerusalem, many Jewish families by that time had settled down in Mesopotamia and made new homes there, and they never came back.

So between the Assyrian deportation and the Babylonian captivity, that accounts for the massive Jewish Dispersion that existed at the time of the New Testament. The Jewish people were scattered all over the Near East and the Mediterranean world, living in many nations for centuries now, and thus speaking the native languages of their respective countries. Yet these Jews would still come back to Jerusalem and go to the temple for the annual pilgrimage festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Booths.

That is why you have all these people from all these lands being present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. But really, more than that, this was all part of God’s plan. God had arranged it for all these people to be there that day. They were all there, in Jerusalem, in and around the temple area, and then when God caused there to be a loud sound, **“a sound like a violent blast of wind,”** that caught their attention, and they all went over to the place where the sound was coming from. God wanted them to be there and to hear what else they now would hear.

What did they hear? First, they heard that the company of the believers **“began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.”** These **“other languages”** were the languages spoken in those other parts of the world that the Jewish pilgrims had come from. These were not languages that the believers knew by learning them in a class. No, this was a miraculous manifestation of the Spirit, specifically given by God for this occasion. It was a message, a signal, that the church now was going to bring the Good News of the mighty works of God - that the Gospel now was to go out to **“every nation under heaven.”** Not just to Jewish pilgrims coming to Jerusalem, but more than that, the Gospel of Christ would now go out, starting from Jerusalem to every nation, to both Jews and Gentiles, to be preached in every language spoken in the world. It was starting, here in Jerusalem, here on Pentecost Day. Remember how Jesus had told His disciples, before He ascended, that *“based on His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47). Well, this is that beginning. This is the moment, right here.

So that is what the apostle Peter begins to do. That’s what the people hear next. Peter proclaims repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name in the sermon that follows here in Acts 2. We get the first part of his message today - we’ll hear the rest of it next week. But the purpose of it all is this: **“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”**

Dear friends, that includes you! You and I need to be saved. We need to be saved from our sins and the judgment that our sin brings down upon us. That sin began in the Garden when our first parents decided they wanted to be their own god. So they gave in to temptation and disobeyed what God had told them. And the judgment came: They were driven out of the Garden and cut off from the tree of life. *“For you are dust and you will return to dust”* the LORD God said (Gen. 3:19). This same sinful tendency that we all share, to be our own god, we see later at the tower of Babel: Men thought they could reach to the heavens and make a name for themselves, apart from God. But God comes down and sees their puny efforts and confuses their language and scatters them to the wind.

Every time we try to be our own god we end up failing miserably, and we continue to do so. You would think we would learn our lesson, but we don’t listen to what God has said. We think we’ll just do what we want, *independent of God’s Word.* That’s always a wrong move, and the judgment is always the same: Death. Confusion. Discord. This is why you and I need saving. We can’t do it ourselves. By my own actions, I already show that I make a lousy god. It’s why I often find myself in trouble. So now, how am I going to rescue myself? *“What a wretched person I am! Who will rescue me from this body, which is bringing death?”* (Romans 7:24). I can’t. God must do it for me.

And that is exactly what He has done. *“Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (Romans 7:25). To this world of confusion, God has sent a Saviour. Jesus Christ is His name. He, the Son of God has come in the flesh to save us. Peter will go on to tell us next week in greater detail just how this has happened, but I can’t help but tell you some of that right now. Christ, the Son of God, has come down from heaven and has fulfilled what the Father gave Him to do, which is to win our salvation. He has kept God’s commandments perfectly in our place. And even though He was sinless, Jesus has taken the judgment for our sins - again, in our place. He has died on the cross for us, to gain our forgiveness. *The cross of Christ is our tower that does reach to the*

heavens. He lifts us up and takes us there. Christ our Saviour has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, and in His name, through faith in Him, we shall join Him there.

This is the Good News; this is the Gospel that all men everywhere need to hear. This is what Pentecost is all about: the beginning of that worldwide outreach. Not only do Parthians and Medes get the Good News, so do we. “**Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people living in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia,** ¹⁰ **people living in Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Jews as well as proselytes,** ¹¹ **and people from Crete and Arabia**” - they all heard the mighty works of God being told in their own tongues. But so do we, and people from all over the world today. Family and friends, strangers, people near and far - all hear the Gospel of Christ being proclaimed in their own language.

The first Pentecost was the beginning. Pentecost 2022 is the continuation, for now the Gospel is being proclaimed to all who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. For Christ Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world¹, the Lamb who was slain, and by His blood, He has redeemed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.²

So it is that “**everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**” May it be so. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR PENTECOST

Almighty, eternal God, we praise You today for giving the Holy Spirit to the Church to bear witness to Your saving truth in Jesus Christ. Fill Your Church again now with heavenly power, and sanctify Your people as they now come before You in praise and prayer.

We praise You, above all else, for the precious gifts of faith, eternal life, love, joy, and peace through Your Spirit. We thank You for His inspiration of the prophets and apostles who wrote Your Word. We thank You for protecting the Holy Scriptures, so that we still have them today. Grant that we may be eager to hear Your Word also today. May we receive the words we hear as Your words, and so remain in Your truth and life. Help us to appreciate them and to use them as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path day by day. Help the precious truths of Your Word to shine brightly among all people, so that many more may gladly accept Your truth, and trust in the Saviour. We thank and praise You for the willingness and courage that the Spirit has given to Your people ever since the days of the apostles, to spread the Gospel among the nations. Give us similar willingness and courage, that people everywhere may learn to sing Your praises and to rejoice in Your salvation.

Loving Father, by Your Spirit renew in us sincere repentance for our sins and faith in Jesus. Direct and rule our lives, that we may grow daily in knowing and loving You and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Give us the continuing peace and comfort of Christ's saving love. Arouse within us a genuine desire for all that is right, holy, pure, and just. Cleanse us in both body and soul so that, as temples of the Holy Spirit, we may be loyal to our Saviour, obedient to His words, faithful to His church, and untiring in deeds of love and mercy. Help us to live in holiness, and save us from all unrighteousness. Grant us the spirit of mercy, kindness, peace, and goodwill.

May Your truth and Word have pride of place throughout our land. Teach all people to walk in Your ways, and to respect Your holy will.

Give Your Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to all who must pass through dark valleys and deep waters, that they may find in You their strength and comfort for ever. Be the guardian of all in danger, the friend of all who are lonely, the strength of all who are tempted, the comfort of all who sorrow, the hope of all who despair, and the health of all who are sick. In everything, help us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, for Jesus' sake, in whose precious name we pray. Amen.

¹ John 1:29

² Revelation 5:9

PENTECOST

Genesis 11:1-9

¹ The whole earth had one language with a common vocabulary. ² As people journeyed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ They told one another, “Come! Let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly!” They had bricks for stones and tar for mortar. ⁴ Then they said: “Come! Let us build a city for ourselves and a tower with its top in the sky, that we may make a name for ourselves and that we may not be scattered over the surface of the whole earth!” ⁵ The LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the sons of men had built. ⁶ The LORD said: “Look! They are one people. They all have one language, and this is what they are beginning to do. Now nothing that they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come! Let Us go down there and confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech!” ⁸ So, the LORD scattered them from there all over the earth, and they ceased building the city. ⁹ This is why it was named “Babel,” because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. From there, the LORD scattered them all over the surface of the whole earth.

Acts 2:1-21

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like a violent blast of wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw tongues that separated, like flames, and one rested on each of them. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak. ⁵ Jews who feared God from every nation under heaven were staying in Jerusalem. ⁶ When that sound occurred, a crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard the disciples speaking in his own native language. ⁷ They were astonished and amazed and asked: “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ Then how is it that everyone of us hears in his own native language, ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people living in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, ¹⁰ people living in Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Jews as well as proselytes, ¹¹ and people from Crete and Arabia? We hear them declaring in our own languages the wonderful works of God.” ¹² They were all amazed and puzzled. They asked one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ Others sneered: “They are full of new wine.” ¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: “Men who are Jews and all of you who are living in Jerusalem, understand this and listen closely to what I say! ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. For it is only nine in the morning. ¹⁶ Rather, this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ ‘In the last days, God says, “I shall pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Indeed, even on My male slaves and female slaves I shall pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I shall show wonders in the heaven above and miraculous signs on the earth below: blood, fire and a cloud of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will turn dark, and the moon turn to blood before the coming of the great and splendid day of the Lord, ²¹ and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”’

John 14:23-31

²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We shall come to him and make Our home with him. ²⁴ He who does not love Me does not keep My Words. The Word that you hear is not Mine but the Father’s, who has sent Me. ²⁵ I have told you these things while I am still with you. ²⁶ However, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything that I have told you. ²⁷ Peace I am leaving with you. A peace that is My own I am giving to you. I am not giving it to you as the world gives it. Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid! ²⁸ You have heard Me telling you, ‘I am going away and am coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ Now I have told you before it happens, so that, when it happens, you may believe. ³⁰ I shall not say much to you any longer. For the ruler of the world is coming and has no hold on Me. ³¹ However, the world should realise that I love the Father and that I am doing as the Father has commanded Me! Get up! Let us be going from here!