

Acts 2:1-21

Pentecost challenges the way we think. We think that Christians are people who have at least one ancestor who came from Germany, who speak English as their first language, and who were raised in a stable, well-adjusted home. We're not all that comfortable around people who don't have these qualifications, and we assume that God isn't either.

But Pentecost sets us straight. The disciples, on that day, were not all speaking English; they were telling the mighty works of God in every language under the sun. If Jesus' church was to be an exclusive society, here was the perfect opportunity for the Holy Spirit to make this fact crystal clear. But the Spirit does just the opposite. He demonstrates, through Jesus' apostles, that the Christian church is for all - no matter your language, race, or background; no matter where you come from, who your parents were, or how they raised you. "*Everyone,*" says the Apostle Peter, "*who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*"

The Holy Spirit speaks your language. Some people speak the language of the street. They were raised in a home where the first language was not love; where arguments were common; where screaming was not that unusual. They were raised by one parent, and some by no parents at all. Their life was not within the church; their life was the street - gangs, violence, drugs, sexual promiscuity. A man who was raised speaking this language came to see me one day. Did the Holy Spirit speak his language, he wanted to know. Was their room for him in the church? Could there possibly be a place for him in heaven? Yes, I told him, the Holy Spirit did speak his language. There was forgiveness also for him. This man called upon the name of the Lord. He was baptized. The Holy Spirit gave him faith in Christ Jesus. He confessed his Lord and Savior, and not long after he died, in peace and hope.

Another man, some years later, asked the same question: Did the Holy Spirit speak his language? He was raised in a good home. Love was the language spoken there. His life was lived in the church. But giving in to temptation, he fell away from Christ. But God was merciful. He brought this man to his knees by taking away from him his family, his job, his home...everything. Yes, the Holy Spirit did speak his language. He restored this man. He gave him back to Jesus. This man is still living, and his life is lived in the church, in God's Word, and in prayer.

The Holy Spirit speaks your language. You and I have a past, and our past has shaped us...in some ways that are good, and in ways that have left ugly scars upon us; scars that we see even if others do not. We have a past life, maybe even a present life, which can make us wonder if we fit into the proper mold. A Christian is supposed to live in a certain way. What if we have failed to live this way? Perhaps you or I do not fit the mold the way we should. Is there really a place here in Jesus' church for me? I may come and fill a pew, but not feel comfortable doing so. The other members are surely judging me. They certainly do not speak my language. Does the Holy Spirit? Does He speak my language?

The Holy Spirit speaks the language of Jesus. Jesus came not to exclude, but to include. He came to live with sinners of all stripes and varieties. No resume was required with Jesus. He did no Google search before sitting down to eat with someone. He mingled with thieves - tax collectors. He ate with women of the street. He did not shun them; He opened His arms to them. Jesus spoke the language of sinners; the best sinners and the worst sinners.

There was shunning going on with Jesus, but it did not come from Him; it came from the Pharisees, and from those who saw no need for Jesus. The Pharisees excluded Jesus because He included wretched sinners. They wanted no part of Him because He came to be a part of everyone's life.

The Pharisees did not speak the language of Jesus, but He still spoke their language. He prayed for them to repent. He bore their sinful pride in His own body on the cross. He died for them. "*Father,*" He prayed as He was dying, "*forgive them.*" Jesus spoke the language of love and mercy even for those who refused Him.

Jesus spoke this language for you. Not one of you speaks a language Jesus does not know. Not one of you has a past or a present which excludes you from Jesus. If you feel excluded in Jesus' church, it's not because of Him. It's because of me. It's because of others here like me who have too much Pharisee in us. I'm sorry if I have made you feel excluded. I need to repent daily for not speaking the language of Jesus clearly.

The Holy Spirit clearly speaks the language of Jesus. He spoke it to you when you were baptized. He spoke Jesus into your heart through the water. He gave Christ to you, and you to Christ. Whatever mold you came out of, the Holy Spirit fit you beautifully into Jesus. He could do this because Jesus fit your sinfulness into Himself on the cross. He did not pick certain sins or certain sinners. He died for all. He died for you. Whoever you are; wherever you come from; whatever language you speak - the language of a stable home or of a broken home, the language of the church or the language of the street, the language of parents who loved you or of parents who disowned you and abandoned you - you have a God who includes you. There is a place for you in Jesus' church; a place for you in His heart. Jesus is your Savior too. You are forgiven of all your sins. And so there is a place for you with Jesus in heaven.

The Holy Spirit speaks your language, but He does not speak the language of willful and intentional sin. Your past and present cannot keep you from Jesus, but your future can. If you are living in sexual sin, repent. You are forgiven. But go and sin no more. To ignore Jesus; to reject the Holy Spirit by sinning intentionally and willfully, is to speak the language of Satan. He who does that excludes himself from Jesus; excludes himself from the church, from the Communion Table; excludes himself from heaven. This language may be in your past; it must not be in your future. "*Everyone,*" says the Apostle, "*who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" We cannot call upon the name of the Lord while engaging in willful sin. It's one or the other.

You are weak, and so am I. We do not call upon the name of the Lord as we should. Thank God the Holy Spirit speaks this language for us. He is calling you and me away from our sin. He is calling us to Jesus. To call upon the name of the Lord is the work of the Holy Spirit within us. We cannot speak this language on our own.

Do not fear, friend. The Holy Spirit speaks your language. He brought you out of your past to Jesus. He keeps you with Jesus. He fights against your desire to sin. He calls you to repent. He speaks forgiveness, Jesus' forgiveness, to you to comfort you.

No wonder we Christians are so grateful for the Day of Pentecost. For now the Holy Spirit, who speaks our language, and who speaks the language of Jesus, is here with us to stay. Amen.