

In Our Own Language Acts 2:1-21

There is a song “Spirit of the Living God” that invites God to send the Holy Spirit to empower our lives. Today we examine how God has answered that prayer. Seven weeks ago we celebrated Easter and the Resurrection of Jesus as the first fruits from the dead and today we celebrate Pentecost and the birthday of the church. Pentecost means “fiftieth” because this feast was held fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:15–22). At Pentecost, the Jews celebrated the giving of the Law, but Christians celebrate it because of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church.

The Feast of Firstfruits was on Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday, and Pentecost took place on the 50th day after the Sabbath following Passover, which means it was always on the first day of the week. Christians assemble and worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, because on that day our Lord arose from the dead, but it was also the day on which the Holy Spirit was given to the church.

We know there was a ten-day prayer meeting just before the miracles of Pentecost. But we do not have to wait and pray for the Holy Spirit. It is giving to us when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and it fills us over and over again to empower us for our various ministries.

It was on Pentecost the Spirit came and the people heard the sound of rushing wind and saw tongues of fire. The Spirit baptized and filled the believers, and then spoke as they praised God in various languages. The Spirit empowered Peter to preach, and then He convicted the listeners so that 3,000 of them trusted Christ and were saved. Let’s consider these ministries and how they apply to each of us.

The Spirit came (vv. 2–3). The Holy Spirit had been active prior to Pentecost and had worked in Creation (Gen. 1:1–2), in Old Testament history (Jud. 6:34; 1

Sam. 16:13), and in the life and ministry of Jesus (Luke 1:30–37; 4:1, 14; Acts 10:38). However, now there would be two changes: the Spirit would dwell in people and not just come on them, and the Spirit's presence would be permanent, not temporary (John 14:16–17).

The Spirit baptized (1:5). The Greek word *baptizo* means “to submerge,” or “to be identified with.” The baptism of the Spirit is that act of God by which God identified believers with the exalted Head of the church, Jesus Christ, and formed the spiritual body of Christ on earth (1 Cor. 12:12–14).

The Spirit filled (v. 4). The filling of the Spirit has to do with power for witness and service (Acts 1:8). We are exhorted to be filled by the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), for we need the Spirit's power constantly if we are to serve God effectively.

The baptism of the Spirit means that I belong to Christ's body; the fullness of the Spirit means that my body belongs to Christ. The baptism is final; the fullness is repeated as we trust God for new power to witness. The baptism involves all other believers, for it makes us one in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1–6); while the fullness is personal and individual.

The Spirit spoke (vv. 5–13). As the believers were praising God, they used known languages (Acts 2:6, 8). Luke named fifteen different geographical locations and clearly stated that the citizens of those places heard Peter and the others declare God's wonderful works in languages they could understand.

Why did God do this? This gift of tongues was to let the people know that the Gospel was for the whole world. God wants to speak to every person in his or her own language and give the saving message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Remember that Luke's emphasis in the Book of Acts is on worldwide evangelization, “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). “The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of

missions,” said Henry Martyn, “and the nearer we get to Christ, the more intensely missionary we must become.”^{1 2}

I believe that the Holy Spirit allows us to hear in a language we can understand, but also allows us to service in a language that is compatible with our gifts. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:4-13:

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.³

Paul taught the member of the church of Corinth that the same Holy Spirit, given on Pentecost, is the source of our unity and our ministries. *We depend on the same God (vv. 4–6): “the same Spirit... the same Lord... the same God.”* We

¹Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Ac 2:1

²Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:357

³ *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. 1 Co 12:3-13

individually may have different gifts, ministries, and ways of working, but “it is God which works in you both to will and to do of God’s good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). The source of the gift is God; the sphere for administering the gift is from God; and the energy to use the gift is from God.

The gifts of the Spirit are given for the good of the whole church. They are not for individual enjoyment, but for corporate employment. When we accept our gifts with humility, then we use them to promote harmony, and this helps the whole church.

In a sermon called “The Company of the Gifted,” Ralph Bates tells of a young woman in the perfume department of a large department store who asked the customers, “Would you like to have Charisma?” It they said “Yes,” she would spray a perfume called “Charisma” on the and say, “Now you have charisma. Charisma is the Greek for “gift from God.” It was so important in the early church that the various gifts are named in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 and 28, and also in Ephesians 4:11 and Romans 12:6–8. While the gifts named are adequate for the ministry of the church, God is not limited to these lists. God may give other gifts as God pleases.

Paul tells of the same Holy Spirit given on Pentecost, has given each of us gifts. Through the Spirit, one is given the gift of prophecy to speak the word of God with authority. To another is given the gift of wisdom. Persons with wisdom spend hours in prayer listening to God. There is the gift of knowledge. This is being able to say the right thing at the right time. There is the gift of faith, to speak boldly and confidently for God, believing that faith can move mountains. As your pastor I know many of you have this gift. There are gifts of healing and miracles. There is the gift of exhortation, one who encourages and enables others. We all know those people that we just like being around and make us better for the encounter. There is the gift of gifts. These people know how to give gifts. There are the gifts

of mercy, of compassion, loving and caring for other people. I know some nurses who have this gift. I also know people in this congregation with these gifts. I remember my friend Suzi Cummins who had these gifts...it did not matter whether she was hosting the Vice President of the United States or a newly met friend...you knew you were special and cared for. There is the gift of evangelism, telling others about Jesus Christ. Persons with this gift are excited, enthusiastic, and effective in sharing their faith. Dr. Billy Graham comes to mind in our generation, but we all can share our faith with others. God is the giver of these gifts through the Holy Spirit. They are given to build up the church as the Body of Christ. Each of us has at least one gift and some have two or three or four or five.

Gifts are given to do particular tasks. When God calls us to the task of ministry, God gives us the gifts and the energy for the job. When those gifts are fully energized, they are beautiful to behold.

I believe in the same way that God allowed each visitor to Jerusalem to hear the good news in their own language on the day of Pentecost, God gives each of us a language of service and ministry. It is not a good thing when we insist on doing ministries that we are not gifted to do. We become frustrated and miserable and so do the people around us. When we discover our gifts and use them for the benefit of others the church is strengthened and God is given the glory. When we use our gifts to serve God we attract others to a saving relationship with Jesus. When we use our gifts we are able to do things that seem beyond our ability.

We must discover, develop and use our gifts. Did you ever have the experience of people calling out to you what abilities they saw as your giftedness? I had this experience. It is very revealing and we learn about our strengths. We can also find our gifts through prayer. In communion and relationship with God we discover God's will for our lives. We listen as God calls us into service and servanthood. God opens the doors, but it our opportunity and choice to walk through those

doors. God would not give us a gift unless there was an opportunity to use that gift.

We find our gifts by being in the right place at the right time with our gifts. There is a book called the Five Love Languages, which tells us that each of us respond to a built in language that shows love...praise, service, time, gifts, intimacy. I see this is relationship to our giftedness and service to God. Discover how God wants you to serve and do that to the best of your ability. The Holy Spirit has already given you the gifts you need!

Again our prayer must be come Holy Spirit come, mold us, fill us use us and have your way!