Pentecost—Year B
Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104:25-35, 37
Romans 8:22-27
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

There's a lot of wild stuff going on today in these lessons—very fitting for a feast like **Pentecost**. The **disciples** have seen their **beloved Lord ascend to heaven**. They've **pulled their gaze back down to earth**. They've **returned to that upper room**, and **Mathias has now been added** to their circle to **fill out the twelve**.

Now, it's the day of **Pentecost**, a **prominent Jewish feast** which marked that **the Law was given on this day, seven weeks after the Passover**. **They are all together in one place, and suddenly from heaven there came a sound like a rush of a violent wind.** This **wind**, it was **no gentle little breath of God**, but it **came among them with force**; this **breath of God** was going to turn **them upside down**, and it **filled the entire house where they were sitting**.

And then, **divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them**, **settled on them**, **determined that *this one* would be its abode**. **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.**

Oh, this is about to get really interesting.

Now, there were a whole lot of devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem at that time. And when they heard this sound, a crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each, and they were amazed and astonished. *How can this be?*

"Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? *Oh, I detect some judgement here.* **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—*Arabs? Yes, Arabs, they were there too*—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"**

For years and years, I focused on the **sound** of **all the different languages being spoken**—like when we have had people read this passage in French and German and Spanish and Greek and Swahili—all at the same time--and because I speak English, it **always sounded like babbling to me—delightful**, **provocative**, **but unintelligible**.

But there are **two parts to this equation**, and both parts are rich and powerful. There is the **speaking in another language**; **being given the capacity to speak in a language that is not your own AND** there is the **hearing in a language that is native to you *from someone who has never had the capacity to speak that language before***.

Oh yes, do you see where this going???

Think about some of our **greatest divisions** today; think about **all the places in our country** or **in our world** where we are **just missing each other, completely talking past each other**, where we **don't understand each other at all**, where we **find the other absolutely incomprehensible**.

And can you imagine, on ***this***, on ***THIS*** **Pentecost day**, can you imagine the **breath of God swooping into this place with force**, **filling up this entire space**, and can you **imagine tongues of fire resting on each person's head**, **filling them with the Spirit**, **setting them on fire with the Spirit**?

And, just for imagination's sake, **can you imagine progressives starting to speak the language that is native to conservatives so authentically that conservatives feel known and validated**? AND **can you imagine conservatives starting to speak the language that is native to progressives so authentically that progressives feel known and validated**?

Can you **hold in your mind's eye where you stand *on any of the issues dividing us* in our country**, and **can you imagine would it be like** to **feel yourself suddenly speaking the language that you don't understand at all** *in a way* that **the person on the opposite side says, "Oh my gosh, yes!"?**

And **can you imagine what it would be like to hear that person who has been incomprehensible to you**, **unintelligible**, *all the sudden* **speak the language native to your heart**?

Can you imagine a more intimate experience of connection and communion?

And here's the thing, it's **not us doing this**, we **can't get there on our own**, but **this is God's doing**, and **the violence with which God sends this divine, fiery breath of God** is **a sign** that **God's kind of done with us missing each other at every turn**.

Romans 8 tells us that **the Spirit is lodged deep within us** and **that Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words**. **God is always searching the heart**, **honing in on the mind of the Spirit that lives *within* us**, **calling *that* Spirit forth to transcend all of our language barriers, literal and figurative**. **ALL of us want to be heard** and **understood** and **valued**, and *more than anything*, **God wants us to know our common humanity** that is so **beautifully and powerfully reflected in *all* our different voices**.

But start talking across the lines that society has so clearly drawn, and you are going to draw fire. In the very next line of **Acts**, **as so many are amazed and astonished at the capacity to move beyond one's own preferred language *to* the language of the other**, **as so many are amazed and astonished at all the understanding that's breaking forth in such a miraculous way**, the **sneering** begins. **Acts 2:13**: **"But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."**

John 16:1-4, *the verses we don't hear in today's passage*, puts it in even starker terms, and I'm going to read this from *The Message* translation, **Jesus says: "I've told you these things to prepare you for rough times ahead. They are going to throw you out of the meeting places. There will even come a time when anyone who kills you will think he's doing God a favor. They will do these things because they never really understood the Father. I've told you these things so that when the time comes, and they start in on you, you'll be well-warned and ready for them."**

Rough times, people throwing each other out, going after each other thinking we're doing God a favor—sounds pretty accurate—and **all the while, doing these things because we've not understood how big and vast and deep God's love runs**.

But back to **Acts**.

Peter will not be deterred. "*Oh, no, no, no, **they're not drunk; it's only 9 o'clock in the morning** by the way; no, this is a **Joel** moment, as in **Joel the prophet** moment. He told us a long, long time ago:*

'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
all flesh, not just some flesh, but 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,
all those people that society has dismissed, pushed to the side,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
Even creation herself is going to be doing some whacky stuff,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved,
shall be made whole.'"

You see, **God is much more interested in making us whole**, **individually** and as a **society**, *than* **which side can shout louder making their point**. **God is much more interested in us hearing the longings of one another's hearts** *than* in **us staying in our well-protected echo chambers**. **God is much more interested in the unfathomable beauty of speaking languages that have been out of our reach** and **beyond our capacity**, *until this very moment*, AND **hearing languages from sworn enemies that ignite our imaginations** *than* **preserving the safety of never risking the conversation across our differences**. **BECAUSE God is interested in visions and dreams, and God understands it's going to take *all* flesh to give those dreams and visions voice.**

We **need to keep speaking in new languages** and **we need to keep leaning in listening to those so different from us**, *so that* **we can hear the word that speaks straight to our heart when it bursts forth from their mouth**, *maybe even unbeknownst to them*. And we **need to keep letting this violent, fiery breath of God shake us up**, **BECAUSE**, as **Jesus** says so clearly in **John 16**: **"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."**

The **world** keeps **changing** and **evolving**. The **church is always bound by the times** and **places** and **circumstances in which we live**, and **we can all lose sight of the big picture**, ***but God is not bound by these; God is only bound by love.***

Jesus knew that neither *that* time 2,000 years ago nor all the times since weren't ready for all that he had to say; he **knew that there would be so many things that we couldn't bear along the way *until* we reached a point of strength where *could* bear them**.

Peter is a great case in point—he will have to keep growing the circle of who is included, first to Mathias *then* to all these Jews from every nation under heaven *then* to the Gentiles, an idea unimaginable to him *until it wasn't.*

And just **think of all the changes in the Episcopal Church alone in our lifetimes—women's ordination, the place of LGBTQ+ children of God**, and **on and on**. And **at every point**, **where our circle needed to expand and our love needed to stretch**, **Jesus sent the Spirit of truth to guide us into the truth that was *then* ours to bear, no matter the cost.**

So, yes, **Jesus has *gone***, but **THIS day**, we **celebrate that the Spirit has *come***.

What truth is the **Spirit breathing upon us with some force**? With **what truth** is the **Spirit touching us**, **burning its way into our very souls**? **What truth** is the **Spirit aching for us to speak** that **may have been a truth we couldn't even recognize**? **What truth** is the **Spirit preparing us to hear from the most unlikely source**?

What **visions and dreams** is the **Spirit stirring amongst us**? Will we **allow ourselves to be amazed**, **astonished** even, OR will we **sneer and dismiss it all as drunken nonsense**?

So many things to discern on **this Pentecost day**; **so many choices**. But the **Spirit is in the house filling this *entire* place**, **violent wind**, **breath of God**, **tongues of fire**, **resting on you, resting on me**. **What are you going to do with all this power that God has placed in your hands** and **on your tongue**? **What good news is yours to proclaim** that you **just couldn't bear until this very day**?

It's a **little past 9 o'clock**, **around 11 to be more specific**, and **people** may **sneer** and say we're **drunk**, but it's **time we got to speaking whatever God has given us to say**. Amen.

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