



PENTECOST
SUNDAY MAY 31ST, 2020

THE WORLD, THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH
WITH AN EYE TO NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK
(MAY 27TH – JUNE 3RD)



The three weeks of Ascension (last week), Pentecost and Trinity (next week), follow sequentially for good reason: they are connected. Ascension Sunday, when Jesus, leaves his followers with the Spirit, to have the freedom to get on with the job of renewal of the world, paints a picture of human beings as co-creators with God in shaping history: hence last week, the theme of “You shall be as God”: the Christian Doctrine of *theisos*, summed up in the idea that “God became human so that humans might become Godlike.

Today, we continue this idea of human beings moving beyond brokenness to become God’s creative partners in the world, in the idea of Pentecost. In an ancient world characterized by tribalisms, which were generally theologically grounded and justified, the vision of people hearing God speak, each in their own language, was unheard of. Language is one of the most concrete, tangible marks of difference between people, a mark that makes people unintelligible to each other. The experience of people hearing God in their own diverse languages, directly challenged the idea of a God who should reflect national or cultural, or group interest. At Pentecost, the vision is romantic, broad and dramatic. To use the modern over-worked term, it is about hospitality and inclusivity – but grounded in God, not in exclusive national, cultural or linguistic identity.

We Gather Together

Announcements

Preparation for Pentecost: Veni Creator—Come Creator Spirit (TiS 750, Jacques Berthier)

(Rosemary our pianist will play this for the purpose of quiet meditation)

Invitation to Worship

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with you

And also with you

We light the Paschal Candle

We light the candle celebrating the vision of Pentecost when we envision, imagine, dream and commit

Hymn: Sing of the Lord's goodness (TiS 183, The Lord's Goodness, Ernest Sands)

A Prayer for Pentecost:

Questioning and Challenging the Securities We Build Around Ourselves as Adoptees of the Holy Spirit

One can read church history in various ways, through various lenses. One fruitful way of doing this is through the tension between the Spirit of God and the Church. Put in broad terms, the Spirit is a much more radical force than is the Church: the Spirit as God's creative energy through creation is adventurous, looking forward to the fulfillment of history. The Church on the other hand, almost from the beginning looked backward, focused on its roots, defending what it considers to be its place in the world. As we read Scripture, we see this tension in the Hebrew Bible, between the Spirit's voices in the prophets and the institutional preoccupations of the kings. In the New Testament Gospels, we see it again arising between Jesus and the established religious power base of both the Pharisees and Sadducees. In the Epistles, when we move to the experience of the early Church, it again pops up, as Christians very early in the peace, intuitively seek to domesticate God's Spirit, either through imposing a restrictive view of the Spirit which panders to a select group (the Corinthian Church) or settles upon a rules-based faith grounded in the religious law (the Galatian Church).

To be Christian means becoming part of the adventurous nature of the Spirit, not taming the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit stuck her tongue out at the church
 and before we knew it
 we were hearing things, speaking things
 we had never dreamed of or wondered about.
 Welcome stranger, alien, outsider,
now you are called sister, brother, friend
 Gather around asylum seeker, refugee, immigrants,
 we hear your language,
 no-one shuns you here.

***Dance your way through the door, lost ones
 and teach us your wild moves
 and we will teach you ours***
 Stroll in you wounded souls and skins
 and let us wrap and kiss your pain to healing.

Make room, settled ones
***for the wave is surging
 and it will unsettle your closed-mouth silence.***

Nothing,
 not even our reserved-ness can stop our mouths
 from sputtering words of grace
 able to blow open
 any door,
 any wall,
 opening living spaces
 for all people, for all flora and fauna.

***O what the Spirit can do
 when set free to tousle the world's hair,***

The Peace

SMG is online this morning

Introduction to the Theme of Pentecost

LET'S HEAR THE WORD

Acts 2:1-11 (The Good News Translation)

One of the three pilgrimage festivals, Pentecost falls 50 days (seven weeks) after Passover, as its Greek name, *Pentecoste* (50th), preserves. It is also called the Feast of Weeks, an occasion to celebrate the gathering in of the harvest (Exod 3:14-17; Lev 23:15-22). It also became a time to celebrate the coming of the divine Law on Sinai. Legend has it that on that occasion a flame came down from heaven and divided into 70 tongues of fire, one for each nation of the world. All could understand, but only one nation promised to keep the Law, Israel. We celebrate the Day of Pentecost as the day of the coming of the Spirit because of Luke's symbolic history. In John's gospel the Spirit is a gift of the risen Jesus on the day of resurrection when he appears after having risen and ascended to the Father - all back to front, when compared with Luke's scheme. He is celebrating the presence of the Spirit in the early Christian movement. He does so with a slight sense of humour. He alludes to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, which Paul also mentions, and gives it also a symbolic twist. It makes people sound like drunks to those who do not know what is going on. But to those who do know, here is a language miracle, which reverses the curse of the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis. Communication is restored! Luke nowhere follows his creative innovation through to its logical conclusion at a literal level, namely, that Christians filled with the Spirit don't have to learn languages! How often people have wished that they could! So, here, too we have symbolism.

Like a movie director, Luke creates a scene with wind and fire. The scene is a commentary on the whole movie to follow. The God of Sinai and the Law is acting again. The promise of an abundant flow of God's Spirit is being fulfilled.

2 When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. **2** Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. **4** They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

5 There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious people who had come from every country in the world. **6** When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because all of them heard the believers talking in their own languages. **7** In amazement and wonder they exclaimed, "These people who are talking like this are Galileans! **8** How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? **9** We are from Parthia, Media, and Elam; from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia; from Pontus and Asia, **10** from Phrygia and Pamphylia, from Egypt and the regions of Libya near Cyrene. Some of us are from Rome, **11** both Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism, and some of us are from Crete and Arabia—yet

all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!”

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Psalm 104: 24-35 (NIV)

Psalm 104 is one of the great psalms of the collection, often called ‘the pearl of the Psalter’. It is a hymn to the Lord as creator and is written in typical hymnic style. It has found wide use in both Jewish liturgy (it is chanted on the morning of Yom Kippur, the ‘Day of Atonement’, and on the evening of the New Moon, and on Sabbaths through winter; all these are occasions celebrating new life) as well as in Christian liturgy. In Greek Orthodox churches Psalm 104 is sung daily in vespers in gratitude for the life of the day. It has also been associated in Christian circles with Pentecost activities, chiefly because of the reference to the ‘spirit’ in v. 30. Historically, the psalm bears many similarities to the Egyptian hymn to Aten (the sun god) from the period of so-called Egyptian ‘monotheism’ under Akhenaten (1364-1347 BCE). These similarities are strong enough to suggest that parts of the psalm have been taken from the Egyptian hymn. On the other hand we should also note that Psalm 104 has similarities to Genesis 1.

- ²⁴ How many are your works, LORD!
 In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- ²⁵ There is the sea, vast and spacious,
 teeming with creatures beyond number—
living things both large and small.
- ²⁶ There the ships go to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.
- ²⁷ All creatures look to you
to give them their food at the proper time.
- ²⁸ When you give it to them,
 they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good things.
- ²⁹ When you hide your face,
 they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to the dust.
- ³⁰ When you send your Spirit,
 they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.
- ³¹ May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works—

³² he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

³³ I will sing to the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him,
as I rejoice in the LORD.

³⁵ Praise the LORD, my soul.
Praise the LORD

John 20:19-23 (The Good News Translation)

Luke's was not the only stream of storytelling about the Spirit. John's gospel pictures Jesus ascending on the day of his resurrection (after meeting Mary! 20:17) but before he appears as the risen (ascended one) to his disciples (20:19-23). On that same day of the resurrection Jesus appears to his disciples and gives them the Spirit (19:22). What Luke describes as happening over 50 days John portrays as happening all on the same day! What really happened may be somewhere in between Luke and John. More important, however, than trying to work out what happened when, is the importance of what is being described and celebrated. John helps us to link resurrection and Pentecost in one single scene. 'Peace'(Shalom) may be just, 'Hello!', but it probably includes much more than a greeting. It is the greeting that makes all the difference to them - and us! Its importance comes through what follows: having said, 'Peace', Jesus shows them his hands and side. This is not because they would not otherwise recognise him. Rather it is as the one who suffered that he presents himself. It is like saying: 'Please don't think I have left all that behind!' From a broader perspective we might say that it reminds us that the resurrection is not about turning away from the life poured out in compassion to something else like reward, power and glory, *but* an assertion that this way of love and brokenness is the way, the truth and the life which leads us to God and reveals what God is also like. The cross and resurrection are linked both in Christ and in human experience.

¹⁹ It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁰ After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." ²² Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Christ

For quiet meditation: “How can I keep from singing”, (Singer, Audrey Assad, Composer, Robert Lowry)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li2hddmy63U&list=RDLi2hddmy63U&start_radio=1

Some thoughts around language....

Let's Give: Our Offerings

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

**Prayers of the People including Prayers for Reconciliation
between the Historical People of Australia and those of Us
Whose Ancestors Arrived More Recently**

At the end of each prayer/petition with the words, ***Lord Christ, hear our prayers*** we say ***refresh us to live as reconciled children of the Spirit***

Almighty and loving God, you who created all people in your image,
Lead us to seek your compassion as we listen to the stories of our
past.

You gave your only Son, Jesus, who died and rose again so that sins
will be forgiven.

We place before you the pain and anguish of dispossession of land,
language, lore, culture and family kinship that Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander peoples have experienced.

We live in faith that all people will rise from the depths of despair and
hopelessness. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have
endured the pain and loss of loved ones, through the separation of
children from their families.

We are sorry and ask God's forgiveness.

Touch the hearts of the broken, homeless and afflicted and heal their spirits.

In your mercy and compassion walk with us as we continue our journey of healing to create a future that is just and equitable.

Lord, you are our hope. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여
이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며
나라이 임하옵시며
뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이
땅에서도 이루어지이다.
오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고
우리가 우리에게
죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이
우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고
우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고
다만 악에서 구하옵소서

대개 나라와 권세와 영광이
아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

**Closing Hymn: Great God your Spirit like the Wind (TiS 416,
Jerusalem, Akan Gaunt)**

Blessing and Sending Out

We have access to the Spirit of God!

We see reality more generously

Renewed people!

Renewed society!

Renewed environment!

Our service has ended.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Musical Postlude

Pianist Rosemary Osborne