

Dear Friends

We will be celebrating Pentecost during this month, marking the shift in the Church Calendar from God's Story to Our Story. After the months of remembering and entering the grand narrative of God's saving work, we begin to explore the implications for us, and how we can become participants in the Reign of God.

There are so many themes in the Pentecost passage in Acts 2, but it is probably most helpful if we focus firstly on the miracle of the different languages. The passage makes it clear that the disciples were given a divine ability to proclaim God's gift of life to people who would naturally have been beyond their reach due to language differences.

Notice, that the languages the disciples spoke were human. At Pentecost, the purpose was to speak to people, and so the disciples were given human words to share.

Notice also that the gift of speaking in other languages was given so that the disciples could bring life to the women and men gathered in Jerusalem. It was not a gift for personal enjoyment (although the Bible does allow for that in other circumstances). So, friends, I think that it was part of the mission of the disciples, and it helped to demonstrate that God's Reign crosses boundaries and brings all people together into one, welcoming community.

The challenge for us as we read this story is that, like the first disciples, we are called to be part of God's welcoming, boundary crossing mission. We may not speak in other languages, but we do need to learn to step into the shoes of others, to learn to communicate with them in ways that they will understand. And, of course, the most universal language is that of love.

Secondly, it is significant that the ability to speak in other languages began with the disciples praising God. As we praise God, we open ourselves to see what is praiseworthy in our world, and in others. Then, we are better able to affirm and praise and express love to them through our encouragement, kindness, and support. This month, spend time praising God, and then allow your praises to spill over into affirmation of the people around you. Remember to express this affirmation in a "language" they will understand.

And thirdly, the key moment of transition is the outpouring of God's Spirit. In keeping with the biblical principle of "passing the mantle" from prophet to disciple, Pentecost is the moment in which Jesus "passes the mantle" on to us. We have learned from him what God's mission is, and now we have received his Spirit to continue his work. So, Pentecost is a gift, but it is also a preparation, an empowering, for the work ahead. As we seek to follow Christ in this world, we will face many challenges that are beyond our ability to overcome. We will encounter many people whom we would not naturally be able to love. We will confront many aspects of ourselves that we would rather deny than heal. But we do not have to deal with these issues alone.

In conclusion, the gift of the Spirit empowers us to find creative solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems. The Spirit fills us with the love of Christ and enables us to reach out even to our enemies. And the Spirit reveals what needs to change in us and brings God's healing and transforming grace into our lives.

Grace

*Romeo.*