

Pentecost Story: The miracle of communication

Interactive all-age sermon, Cashmere, Silvia Purdie,
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It was festival weekend in Jerusalem.

Have you ever been to a school fair? or a carnival? a parade?

Every year people go to Jerusalem from all over the world ... I went last year with my son Ben. We saw people from

(what are some other countries you have heard about?)

America and India and Africa and even New Zealand. And some special times of the year, like Easter, there are thousands and thousands of people there.

Our story this morning happened on a festival day in Jerusalem. Jews would go to Jerusalem from all over, and they would stay for a month, from Passover to Pentecost.

So this festival morning, the day of Pentecost, was such an important day for the followers of Jesus that we call it the birthday of the church. It had only been 5 weeks since Jesus died on the cross, and what a lot had happened in those 5 weeks! The friends of Jesus had all seen him, alive, in his resurrected form. They had talked to him, he had explained a lot of things to him ... they never knew from day to day what to expect. They were continually being amazed and surprised by Jesus. Then one day, just a week ago, Jesus shocked them again by saying that he was leaving. And they had watched as his resurrected body lifted right off the ground and literally flew up into the air and disappeared.

I don't suppose they were very happy about Jesus leaving. But he had told them that he had to go so that he could give himself back to them in a different form.

"Wait here" he had told them.

"What is coming is even better than having me here with you."

I don't suppose they agreed with him; they were too muddled to know what to feel. So they waited. And while they waited they met up each day. They had no idea what else to do.

And on the festival day of Pentecost they met up first thing in the morning after breakfast, in the city. Luke forgot to tell us exactly where they met, but Jerusalem had lots of plazas and meeting places outside the Temple. They were praying and wondering what to do next when suddenly there was a loud noise, like a sudden storm hitting, but it was not a storm

Can you make a noise like a storm?

And then there was light, and it wasn't sunshine, the light was coming from inside the people. I don't know how it happened, maybe first one person and then another and then another until every person who was there, every person who had seen the risen Jesus and who loved him, every man and every woman, every old person and every child, was lit up. With the light came a feeling, a feeling of energy and power. And the light looked a bit like fire, almost as though each person was a candle shining brightly with a flame that danced and flowed around them as they moved.

What would you look like if you had spirit fire shining all around you?

The firey energy made it quite impossible to stand still, and it made it quite impossible to stay silent. They didn't just sit there feeling nice and warm inside, they just couldn't! They told each other how amazing God is, because it was totally obvious to them that this feeling, this energy, was God energy.

And the funny thing was, it also felt just like Jesus energy. The feeling was just the same as the feeling they had when they had been with Jesus. It was the feeling of being loved, of being important to God, of having important things to do, important things to say. So they told each other how amazing God is, of course they did.

All of this was getting quite noisy, and people came to see what was going on. Other people had heard the storm-noise, and now they heard excitement – what was happening?

Remember that people had come to Jerusalem from lots of other countries, and they spoke lots of other languages. But when all these people came asking 'what's going on?' the friends of Jesus told them about how amazing God is, the people from other countries were very surprised to be able to understand what they were saying. Because suddenly the friends of Jesus were speaking in exactly the language of the person they were talking to!

Can you say any words in another language?

We have some people here who can speak several languages ... if Elisabeth discovers that you are from Germany she can change her words so that she is speaking to you in German. And if you speak Chinese then Ella can speak to you in Chinese.

But these followers of Jesus had no idea they were even talking different languages, they had never learned the other language, they

were just talking and God was translating it, in their own voice. How amazing!

You see, that's just what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit is a fire of love. The Holy Spirit brings people together and makes friendships happen. He is a relationship Spirit. And Pentecost was a miracle of communication, so that people could hear the truth and come to friendship with Jesus.

I don't know if it has ever happened again quite like the day of Pentecost, but there have been many many times when the Holy Spirit has helped people cross barriers of language. It happened to my husband once when he was praying in a group of youth leaders and our Samoan friend told him afterwards that he had been praying in Samoan, and what he had said had deeply touched her heart. When I am with Maori people sometimes I feel that the Holy Spirit stirs up the little that I know of the Maori language.

God is all about communication. And God is all about team work. The followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost each knew that they had something to say, and they found the courage to say it, even to people they didn't know. They told their story, what they knew about their wonderful God. And God flowed through that and spoke into the hearts of more and more people. That's how God works.

Through the Spirit of Jesus God takes our few words and makes more of them. He takes the little that we can do and makes of it something more. That's how the Spirit works – you step out and God meets you and together there is Kingdom power in Jesus moments. And those moments always kind of remind us of Jesus, his love, his care for people, his family-making community, his boundless forgiveness, his special care for those who are ignored or down-trodden, and his great great capacity for celebration and thankfulness. Because the Holy Spirit is Jesus with-us and in-us.

And this is the story of the miracle of Pentecost, the birthday of the church.