

For this reason we give thanks, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and faith in the truth.

Whatever things were written before were written for our learning. That Scripture which forms the basis for our patience and comfort today comes from Acts chapter 2, verses 1-21 –

Acts 2:1–21 (NKJV)

- 1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*
- 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*
- 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.*
- 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*
- 5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.*
- 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.*
- 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"*
- 8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?*
- 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,*
- 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,*
- 11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."*
- 12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"*
- 13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."*
- 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.*
- 15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.*
- 16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*
- 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.*
- 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.*
- 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.*

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'

Now You're Speaking God's Language

LET US PRAY: Holy Spirit, end our sadness; pierce the clouds of sinful night; Come, O source of sweetest gladness, Breathe Your life and spread Your light! Amen.

In Jesus name,

So many, such a great project. Hundreds, thousands, millions? The whole world? They had a common cause. They were united. They were committed. *And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."* (Genesis 11:4)

As we considered in our Old Testament reading – those gathered to build that tower were committed to a common cause. However, their cause was not God's cause. And their language, although united, was not God's language. Their cause was to stay united and make one common name for themselves, whereas God had directed them to be fruitful and fill the earth. They no longer were speaking God's language. There was only one thing to do ... to scatter them ... to scatter the world into many peoples and races, to confuse their cause and divide their dialect with the hope that they would once again return to God's cause and remember His name. And so the world is divided to this day.

The Spirit's work is to gather what has been scattered. The Spirit's work is to unite us once again to the cause of God and to know the language of God. While we might be divided by human language, we are united in the language of the Spirit: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v.21). What was scattered at Babel is gathered at Pentecost. Since Jesus' promise of the Spirit was given, God has been gathering disciples from among every nation under heaven. His universal gospel has gathered sinners like you and me, teaching us His language: to know and speak the wonderful works of God.

NOW YOU'RE SPEAKING GOD'S LANGUAGE

1. Israel: scattered, gathered, and united in the universal language of the gospel – the wonderful works of God

Israel was supposed to be God's special people, a nation set apart by the one true God. Why is it that they come from every nation under heaven, as it says in v.4? Why does the nation which was to be God's own special people speak such a diversity of dialects?

What has happened to the Hebrew dialect, the language of the Old Testament scriptures and worship? As a result of their disobedience and refusal to hear the words of the prophets, God had scattered them. So it was prophesied by the Lord through Jeremiah some six centuries before this event of Pentecost:

Jeremiah 9:13,14,16 ¹³ “Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it, ¹⁴ but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them, ...¹⁶ I will scatter them also among the Gentiles, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them.”

God allowed Israel to be plundered by the Gentiles (the non-Jewish nations) and scattered them as far as Italy, Greece, and Egypt. And this judgment was more than geographical. Not only had they been scattered in their understanding of each other's language, they were scattered in their understanding of God's language; the gospel language was forgotten to the point that they crucified their own chosen Savior.

v.1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

“Pentecost” was among three Old Testament festivals for which the people would gather in Jerusalem each year. But this particular pilgrimage would be unlike any other. As we read in our earlier Gospel reading, Jesus had promised that after His ascension He would send the Spirit to bring to mind all that He had told them. The time had come for God to gather what was scattered, to teach them the language of His Word in a way that would extend to all people, to all nations.

v.11 we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God

The festival of Pentecost would include the singing of Psalms 113-118 – a recounting of the great works of God.

The miracle of the Spirit is to make known the wonderful works of God, to translate it into words that can be understood and believed. To apply it to your context, your life, your troubles.

The tongues of fire on their heads signify energy and language. You can almost feel Peter's zeal and hear his conviction as the Spirit fills him. The disciples were speaking the language of God in the languages of the people – the wonderful works of death and resurrection; the wonderful work of a salvation which excludes no one who believes; they speak in a language which gathers those scattered the world over into one hope, one cause, one speech – “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (v.21).

The prophet Joel says: “whoever!” The life of Jesus was not just the life of one man, but the life of all men; it was a fulfillment of all that the Law of God demanded so that Jews

and Gentiles (non-Jews) alike could partake of salvation. The death of Jesus was not the death of one man, but the death of the whole human race. His death on the cross was the payment not only for the disobedience of the Jews, but for the sins of Gentiles too. And His resurrection was not just the resurrection of one. It was the resurrection of all who believe and call upon His name.

The promise of the Spirit had come and within the first century A.D. every corner of the world would be touched by this new and universal language: “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” Truly the words of Psalm 118 which they sang this Pentecost meant something significant – *This was the Lord's work; it is wonderful in our eyes.*

2. Us: scattered, gathered, and united in the universal language of the gospel – the wonderful works of God

Like Israel, we too have been gathered into this wonderful language of God.

Jesus sent His Spirit so that the Apostles would deliver these wonderful works of God to you. The Spirit has been poured out; the servants of the LORD have prophesied; and the still the Spirit speaks as He fills the Scriptures we consider today.

Without the sending of the Spirit, we are, like Babel, left babbling. Without the inspired work of the Apostles, we would have no objective and reliable source of truth to believe in. Our flesh would be left babbling on, trying make a name for itself, twisting our tongues to rationalize what we know to be wrong.

How many times have we let our tongues join in when we shouldn't have ... at work or at school ... the gossip they spoke about him or her ... the curse words or vulgar language I used to try to fit in ... the dirty joke I shared? How many times have our tongues hurt or caused problems with those we love ... “well you never...” “well you always...”

How many times did I refrained from speaking when I should have? ... the time they were ruining his or her reputation ... the time mocked my Savior or used God's name in vain ... the time when I should have comforted or forgiven or asked forgiveness ... and I said nothing.

How many times have I babbled in my mind, judging others in order to justify my own sins. My flesh simply babbles in the language of Babel.

The work of the Spirit is to scatter the sinful cause of your flesh. To confuse the language of sin and teach you a new language. His work is to tie your tongue so that Christ can speak.

This is God's wonderful work ... to speak words of death and resurrection. The Spirit speaks of Christ – to the worst of sinners, for the worst of sins, He tells of Jesus who gave Himself on the cross. Christ suffered for every sin, for every word spoken that shouldn't have, for every word not spoken that should have, for every sinner. His resurrection declares a universal victory to all who believe.

The Spirit speaks a universal language: "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." You are not nobody to God ... you are "whoever." You are the "whoever" upon whom God's Spirit has been poured out in baptism. "Whoever believes and is baptized." Each time you hear the Word or receive the Lord's Supper, you are calling upon the Lord's salvation and receiving just what He promised – forgiveness.

Now you're speaking God's language – at home, at work or school. Your words mean something; they are not empty. In a dispute with your a spouse, or child, or parent – this language is as simple as "I'm sorry" or "I forgive you" or "Jesus had paid for your sins." ... This is the language of "yes, mom..." and "ok, dad..." with no if, an's, or but's As Luther explained in the eight commandment – "speaking well of your neighbor, and explaining all his words and actions in the best possible way."

We speak God's language at church and in evangelism too.

In conversation with a volunteer coordinator from a local church, I was asked, "why don't more churches join together to help those in need?" I fumbled for an answer ... Because we don't like to help those in need? – no that's not it...

He spoke of common ground and common cause. He said that instead of noting differences, we should focus on the fact that we all love Jesus and we want to help others.

I had to ask myself the question again: "why don't all churches join together to help those in need?"

As I began talking about the importance of teaching and the gospel, the answer soon revealed itself. We were not speaking the same language. For him, common cause was what we feel and do for God – something that could unite all churches. For us, common ground is what God feels and what God has done for us – a language in which so many churches have become scattered.

We should always be striving to offer what ever help we can – physical, financial, etc. However the commission of Pentecost is spiritual; the Spirit's tongues of fire spur us on in the language of the gospel – to touch hearts with the wonderful works of God.

John 14:23 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” May we never forget that name of the Lord – a name which died for us, a name which has risen and lives forever promising grace and every blessing to those who call upon Him; a name which unites us in the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. His name is a name which saves not by us loving Jesus or doing good works for Him; but which saves by Jesus loving and doing wonderful works for us. In this name our common cause is to “speak the same thing” as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Now you’re speaking God’s language. And “whoever” means “whoever.” There are no distinctions as to whom we seek and whom we serve. You never know when you’ll have the opportunity to share these wonderful works with someone the Lord brings your way. Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.

We are committed to a common cause. At church, at home, at work and school. We speak for God; we speak as God. We speak God’s language.

LET US PRAY: Hear, O hear our supplication, Loving Spirit, God of peace! Rest upon this congregation, Great distributor of grace! Amen.