

“What Did God Do at Pentecost?”

Acts 2:1-13

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Pentecost Sunday

Most of you know that seminary students are required to take Greek and Hebrew. I am convinced this is done not merely to teach students the language of the Bible, but to enhance their prayer lives. I assure you more praying occurs in those classes than any others.

I recall thinking about today’s text while taking those classes and praying, “Lord, I understand you gave the disciples instant ability to speak in foreign languages at Pentecost and turned a lot of heads. Would you like to impress people again? If so, I am making myself available to you.” Evidently the Lord did not need me as much as I needed Him. I had to dig hard and study everyday to learn those languages. Nothing came automatically or instantly.

This morning I would like to look at the events of Pentecost through the lens of a question. Pentecost and questions naturally go together, for the pilgrims that witnessed this miracle of hearing or speaking asked several.

“Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” “How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own language?” “All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ ”

To these questions I add my own. What did God do at Pentecost? **It appears to me that He gave His disciples a voice and the confidence they needed to speak.**

These disciples, every one of them, had a message the world needed to hear. It was the story of their faith and how a man named Jesus influenced it. Jesus taught them things about God, life and themselves that no one ever had. He changed them for the better through immeasurable grace and love. That day they realized the whole world needed to hear about this man through their story, and the world was right outside their door. People from every nation in the Roman Empire and beyond had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. The time to tell their story could not have been better.

Something was lacking, however. They were intimidated and frightened, needing confidence and the ability to go tell their story.

The disciples had to be reeling from what happened at the previous Jewish festival of Passover when Jesus was arrested and crucified. This created great unrest and turmoil and surely put the authorities on guard as Pentecost approached. After all, there were even more people at this celebration than Passover because traveling conditions were ideal and more people traveled in late spring and early summer.

Surely this crossed the mind of the disciples as they gathered in Jerusalem again. Even if they had a story that the world needed to hear, would they be arrested and crucified for telling it? That possibility certainly existed, at least enough to paralyze them.

It was at that time they were overcome by a great, wind-like sound from heaven. Each of them was anointed with tongues that appeared as fire. They found not only their voice, but the confidence and ability they needed to go speak. They went boldly into the streets telling their story in such a way that it amazed all that heard them.

I appreciate George Buttrick’s insight into this passage. He states that Pentecost can hardly have been the first occasion when the disciples felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was the guiding and enlightening Spirit that convinced them that Jesus had risen from the grave and led them to replace Judas. But now they became conscious of the **Spirit as power** and realized the vital role it would play in enabling them to go forth to their work of witness bearing.

It is this awareness of the **Spirit as power** that we need today. We need to find our voices and tell our stories, too.

What do you know that people need to hear? What have you experienced that could help others along their journey? What has God revealed to you through Jesus that has changed your life for the better and forever? What difference would it make if you told your story? What difference will it make if you remain silent?

Who needs to hear what God has laid upon your heart? Whose life would be better for having heard your story? Is it a family member, a schoolmate, a coworker, a neighbor, fellow church members or friends in a civic club? Who needs to hear the story God has laid upon your heart, born out of your experiences with the Holy?

I am grateful for those that have shared their story with me. This includes parents and grandparents, siblings, friends, teachers, mentors and even strangers. Let me remind you that we need God's help to listen as well as speak. This was true at Pentecost and is today.

I appreciate the voices I have heard even from a distance that have impacted my life. I am grateful for those that had the confidence to speak clearly and boldly. They have inspired me.

On Pentecost Sunday, I want to encourage you to find your voice. Don't underestimate it. Read the text carefully. Each disciple at Pentecost received the Spirit because everyone had a story to tell. Every person here has a story, too, and needs to find his or her voice.

Then I want you to rely upon the same Spirit of God that enabled the disciples to speak to give you confidence. Ask Him to open doors of opportunity for you to speak and help you to do so clearly, compassionately and boldly.

No, the Lord did not give me instant ability to speak Greek and Hebrew while I was in seminary. He has, however, given me stories to share born out of my experiences with Him. He's given you stories that need to be told, too. With His help, let's share them with many that need to hear them.

