

Rev. Beth J. Costlow
The Day of Pentecost
Acts 2:1-21

May 23, 2021

Prepared for: Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville SC

- Pentecost
 - Not the birthday of the church
 - Jesus' disciples were Church
 - Early Christians were Church for decades before any Gospels were written
 - Not the first time the Holy Spirit is made known
 - It is, perhaps, the first time humanity sees the working of the Holy Spirit with such abundant clarity!
- The Holy Spirit surprises humanity, Part 1
 - There they are, all gathered in one place.
 - Again. Cowering together in a house.
 - Despite Jesus having commanded them—both before his death and after his resurrection—to go out and proclaim him to the world!
 - No matter. God will be God.
 - Divided tongues of fire
 - Each gets their own flame
 - Each gets to speak in a language not their own, “as the Spirit gave them ability.”
 - Note that these are not languages unknown to humanity.
 - They are languages “from every nation under heaven.”
 - Or, more accurately, every nation known to the author of Acts!
 - Compare to Ellis Island in the early-20th century with immigrants from Italy, France, Spain, Poland, Russia, Ireland, Germany, etc.
 - Story of Churchwide Assembly, with people reciting the Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer in their most comfortable language.
 - Cacophony. I had to plug my ears!
 - That's the first surprise God has for the Church on Pentecost

- The Holy Spirit surprises humanity, Part 2
 - Instead of cacophony—a symphony of random, unintelligible sounds, each person present is able to hear the Good News in their own language.
 - No plugged ears, just clear comprehension!
- The “no surprises interlude.”
 - Some sneered and said, “What a bunch of drunks!”
 - Peter (FINALLY!) speaks boldly, “Dudes! They’re not drunk! It’s only 9 am!”
 - And then he goes on with....
- The Holy Spirit surprises the church, Part 3
 - God’s word from the prophet Joel, “In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.”
 - Seminary: All means all. All. All flesh.
 - Sons and daughters. (This means both men and women!)
 - Old men and young. (Obviously, not just men!)
 - Slaves. (Traditionally believed to be in that position because they are somehow less righteous and less worthy of God’s love.)
 - All flesh.
- All means all. Really. Even the ones who annoy us.
 - The neighbor who drives through the neighborhood at 1 am, with the bass pounding so loudly that you feel it in your house? All means all.
 - The coworker who never bothers to contribute to the office coffee fund? All means all.
 - The criminal hanging beside the Savior on the cross—or housed in a correctional facility in the 21st century? All means all.
- All means all. Really. Even our friends, neighbors and loved ones.
 - The young adult who, although brought to worship and Sunday School throughout their youth, doesn’t attend anymore.
 - The ill or aged who have become homebound or are confined to care facilities and are no longer here in person.
 - The parents who find their children’s sports schedules conflicting with church participation.
- Pentecost’s Promise is this: The Spirit of the Lord abides in all flesh. Even me. Even you. Amen.