

Day of Pentecost

Genesis 11:1 – 9; Acts 2:1 – 4

Christians, unite!

Before I begin today’s sermon, I would like to explain a term that is used by Bible scholars. That term is **chiasm**. The term chiasm refers to the shape of the Greek letter chi (X). A Chiasm happens when the beginning and the end seem to be in the same spot. For example: Genesis starts in the Garden of Eden with the Tree of Life. Revelation ends with the Tree of Life. That is a chiastic structure. Today’s texts are another example of a chiasm. The world was divided because of language. The world was brought together because of language.

The text for today’s sermon is from the Old Testament and the Epistle readings appointed for this Sunday, the Day of Pentecost. Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God, our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest, And make our hearts your place of rest; Come with Your grace and heav’nly aid, And fill the hearts which You have made.**

In any organization, in order to avoid confusion, communication is key. If you are in a team meeting and someone is speaking another language, maybe only understood by one or two people in the room, communication is halted. If a group of managers asks someone from tech support to come and do a presentation, and the “techie” starts talking about kilo-whatever, mega-whatever, giga-whatever, tera-whatever; the managers will (more than likely) not understand.

Leading up to some of these meetings, some managers may try to assist the tech in writing the presentation using terms and conditions that are readily understandable by the other managers. This, also, works in the other direction. If a manager starts a meeting talking about percentage of budget overspend in accounting terminology, or starts screaming about “the metrics” without explaining what the metric is intending to count or manage; the technician is lost.

This did not happen **"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..."** It happened less than 6,000 years ago, in the vicinity of what is modern day Bagdad, Iraq. Mass confusion. Caused by God. For the good of the people. For the good of the earth.

God caused a separation, and now He causes unity.

In the Bible, there are many instances where a chiasm occurs. A chiasm is: What was the world like after the flood? The world, before the flood was corrupted and God needed to press the reset button. After the flood, the descendants of Noah all moved en masse (meaning everyone does it together) to the area around current day Bagdad. They spoke one language and synagogued (gathered) together. Why were they sheltering together? It was not because they needed to be safe from their enemies. They are the only ones left. As what happened before the flood, they started to get full of themselves.

They intended to build a city. Possibly, that city would have walls. They planted crops. They would create warehouses in order to store the fruit of the land. They began to feel as though anything they wanted to do is entirely possible AND that God is okay with that.

**1Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”**

Their statement **“let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves,…”** Their intent is to become gods over the land. They wanted a monument that established their reign in the heavens.

This mindset is not frozen in this timeframe. The Israelites, in King David’s time, believed they created a kingdom that would last for multiple generations. The Israelites believed that Solomon’s temple is the place where God would be FOREVER. With the destruction of the temple by the Babylonian Empire, the Glory of the Lord left Israel and Jerusalem. It did not return to Israel, even though the temple was rebuilt in the time of Nehemiah and Zerubbabel.

The Glory of the Lord returned to Israel when??? The moment when the angels told the shepherds **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”** That is when God’s Glory returned to Israel. Only, it didn’t reside in the second temple. God’s Glory resided in God’s temple – Jesus Christ.

Back to our lesson. **let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”** Lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. What did God tell Noah as they emerged from the ark? **And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.** And again: **And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.”**

Their sole purpose is to **Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.** And now, the people are wanting to not be **dispersed over the face of the whole earth.** They believe that they are wresting or taking control of their lives. To them, this is a power move against God. By the way, whenever this happens, God always wins. **5And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. 6And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.**

Why did God cause their language to be confused? What is God’s intent? Did God fear that they would become as powerful as God? NO! God knew that if they completed this task, they (inside their own minds) would think have no need of God. They would think “whatever I want to do, that is my destiny. That is what god wants for me in my life.” They will have created themselves as their own god(s). When a person thinks that they are the ultimate authority in their life, there is no room for God.

Continuing on in our text: **7Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” 8So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.**

God confused their language. God caused them to move away. This is what God intended for Noah and his sons. **Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.** This dispersion of peoples to the ends of the earth helped populate the earth. This dispersion of the peoples also created tribal, regional, and continental warring groups. The Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Cushites, along with the group that eventually became Israelites. These groups warred among themselves.

Do not get me wrong, it is not God’s intent that these groups would go to war. That is the result of sin in each of us. St. Paul wrote of it in Romans 7 **So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.** Paul then goes on to describe wars within himself: **So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.**

How did God cause unity? After Jesus ascended into heaven, God and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. The Holy Spirit filled them and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. **1When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

The text even says that everyone there were amazed and astonished. As Slim Pickens would say *“What in the wide wide world of sports is a-goin’ on here?***” 5Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?**

The list of languages spoken is around 15 languages or tongues. What we gather is when the text says **, they were all together in one place.** This would not only include all the apostles, but also the other believers. Last week’s text spoke of **In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.**

It is easy to believe that among the 120 people, you might have 15 languages spoken at the same time due to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now you have a bunch of people, from all over the earth, hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their own language. This is the reverse of the Tower of Babel. Complete understanding of what is being said. **So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.**

Again, we benefit from the work of the apostles that Pentecost day. We do not need to try to piecemeal the prophecies together in order to find Jesus. They did the work for us. They also modeled, for us, what the Christian life should look like. It may be summed up in two words: Gather together. Gather together to confess our sins and receive forgiveness. Gather together to hear the Word of God read and spoken. Gather together to pray for God’s will to be done, not only inside the church but also outside the church, in the world. Gather together in order to receive the forgiveness of sins offered in Jesus’ Body and Blood in Holy Communion. Gather together to hear the words that Moses directed Aaron to speak over the Israelites.

**Teach us to know the Father, Son, And You, from both, as Three in One That we Your name may ever bless And in our lives the truth confess.**

**Now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**