

## **Sermon on Acts 2:1-21**

**May 19, 2024: Day of Pentecost**

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**“Listen carefully. Speak boldly.”**

*Originally Pentecost was a Jewish thanksgiving-type festival celebrated seven weeks after Passover. On this particular Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the entire community of believers just as Jesus had promised and the scriptures had prophesied. Empowered by the Spirit, the entire community bears witness to God’s activity in multiple languages.*



## **Acts 2:1-21**

When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled

with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?”

“Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.’”

### **Sermon by Pastor Jaime Larson-McLoone**

**“Listen carefully. Speak boldly.”**

“Listen carefully.” That’s Peter’s invitation to the crowd gathered for the festival of Pentecost. To those who are bewildered but curious, wondering where those Galileans got the ability to speak in so many languages. Wondering how they themselves got the power to understand: Listen carefully, Peter says. To those scoffing on the sidelines, certain that the only thing the disciples are spouting is drunken nonsense: Listen carefully, Peter says.

One New Testament professor paraphrases Peter's sermon in this way: "Listen carefully. ... These people are not filled up with wine; they're filled up with God's Spirit. This is the fulfillment of God's promises. God's people are dreaming dreams and seeing visions. They're imagining a better world."\*

Listen carefully. Peter might have something similar to say to those of us here today, witnessing as our confirmands affirm their baptism. Listen carefully. That is one of the things I learned during my two years with this confirmation class. As we wrapped up our time together as a class, I asked our students to answer one or both of these questions: What's something important you learned during our time together? And what is one way you will continue in your faith journey?

All of our students responded, and a couple of our grownups did, too. You'll get to hear their responses later in the service: Listen carefully. And because I asked those questions, it seems only fair that I share one of my answers.

What did I learn during my time in confirmation these past two years? I learned that our students have important things to say - the young people in our lives have important things to say to us as the church and to the world. And we ought to practice listening carefully.

Sometimes, like in our scripture story from Acts, it's easier to scoff than to listen:

Those kids, always on their phones.

Those kids, never showing up in worship. We didn't have a choice.

Those kids, who lets them wear their hair like that?

Those kids - the ones who affirm their baptism here today and the other young people who have grown up in our congregations - they are filled with God's Spirit. We celebrated that way back at their baptisms. They are filled with God's Spirit, and that means, they have things to say.

On this day of Pentecost, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit is poured out, not carefully measured and then administered as needed by

tablespoon or teaspoon or eyedropper. Poured out. On people of all ages and genders, all abilities and ethnicities. Giving us all something to say.

Listen carefully. Our young people have things to say. And we have things to learn. I remember telling Ryder that I like to read, but that fantasy isn't really my genre. And he suggested a book I might try. And it was this wonderful parable about peacemaking, about valuing our own unique gifts and the gifts of others who are not like us, about how we are made for life together, despite all the world's attempts to divide us.



Listen carefully as Liam talks about what he is reading and learning - and asks you to think a little differently about scripture, or a little differently about God. And listen carefully as Casey challenges you to wrestle with some of the hard stuff that is in the Bible. This is how we grow in faith.

Listen carefully to the stories of how Landon and Gray share kindness and grace with the world around them: at school, at work, and in their families. This is how

we live out our faith. Listen carefully, and these young people will offer thoughtful opinions about what makes worship meaningful for them - and what doesn't.

Sometimes what they have to say may be hard for us to hear. The young people in our lives sometimes speak in languages we don't understand. But here's the thing: The Spirit can help us understand, if we are willing to be curious. The Spirit still has the power to take what is spoken in one language and translate into every language.

And that's true for all of us. We all have something to say.

Jesus calls us to testify to the grace and love we have seen and experienced, just like he called those first disciples to testify to what they had seen. And Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will help us. Because so often we are afraid we won't get the words right. That people won't understand us. That they will sneer and scoff.

Jesus doesn't demand that we get it perfect. He tells us that some people will reject what we have to say. But Jesus does give us things to say: Words and dreams and visions of a better world. Words and dreams and visions of the kingdom of God: A kingdom that we have experienced in Jesus. A kingdom in which all that has been broken is healed, a realm in which the walls that divide God's people are toppled, a world in which every person knows what it feels like to be free and welcomed and loved.

As followers of Jesus, we have things to say, so that through us, through the Holy Spirit at work in us, more and more people might experience God's grace and love. Are you wondering what you might say – or how you might say it?

I found a children's book in our library up at my other congregation, Gloria Dei, that offers us some encouragement. It's called "Say Something!" by Peter H. Reynolds.\*\* And even though it's not a book about God or Jesus or Pentecost, it IS about the many languages we are called to speak for the sake of this world that God loves.

“The world needs your voice,” the book begins. “Yes, yours. It doesn’t need to be perfect, as long as it’s from your heart.” You might say your something with words. Or you might not. If someone is lonely, you might say something holy and important by just showing up and sitting beside them. You might say something with art or music, by writing a poem, or by planting a flower garden.

The book ends with the author’s encouragement and a challenge: “Your voice can inspire, heal, and transform. Your voice can change the world. Are you ready to say something?”



We all have things to say. We all have things to learn. This Day of Pentecost challenges all of us to speak boldly, using the different gifts that God has given us. And this Day of Pentecost challenges us to listen carefully, trusting that God speaks in all kinds of languages, to and through all kinds of people. From the youngest to the oldest.

Even you.

**Pastor Jaime**

\*Michal Beth Dinkler, New Testament Professor at Yale Divinity School,  
<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/day-of-pentecost-2/commentary-on-acts-21-21-17>.

\*\* Peter Hamilton Reynolds, “Say Something!” Orchard Books, 2019.

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