

The Day of Pentecost, Gospel Year A

The Holy Spirit Speaks Truth into Our World

Acts 2:1-21

The Day of Pentecost

Analysis by Mark A. Marius

1When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

14But 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. 15Indeed, these

are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷'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.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'



DIAGNOSIS: Wait. What?

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Just Getting Pieces

Language is so often a barrier for people. We speak to be heard, but so often we feel misunderstood. There are obvious challenges to speaking different languages, but differences in vernacular, context, experience, and worldview can also lead to miscomprehension. This only adds to our confusion about the truth and creates division rather than community. Sometimes it takes more work and sacrifice than we are willing to submit to in order to bridge a communication gap. And sometimes our best efforts are futile. What are we to do?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): This Can't Be True

Our hearts don't always trust what we hear. Cynicism tends to discredit the truth in our midst. We rationalize; we favor proof over faith. We dismiss the message by discounting the messenger. Surely these prophets are not trustworthy, and neither are the words they speak. If we can find fault with the message-bearer, we will also find fault with what they say. That's an acceptable way to reject the truth.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Abandoned by the Truth

Unfortunately, our skepticism, cynicism, reticence to trust words of the Holy Spirit—delivered by one whom God chooses—is not saving us from anything. Our temporal justification evaporates before the eternal. Portents in the heavens, signs on the earth, maybe even plagues in our midst, reveal that a higher judgment renders us all equally vulnerable. The Word of God has the final say, and our failure to receive it has unmistakable

consequences. Believing we can separate our selves from the Truth is deadly.

PROGNOSIS: Too Good to Be True

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Truth Be Told

J
e
s
u
s
p
r
o
m
i
s
e
d
t
h
e
H
o
l



y Spirit would come, fill, and guide the disciples. And, true to God's Word, it happens. The power over death that Jesus reveals in the resurrection is now the force God has unleashed in our world. It is this power that guarantees our place in the kingdom. This is God's truth, that he spared no expense in "making known the way of life" (v. 28a). Since God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah (v. 36), we have no way out. Nor do we need it.

***Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Anointed Truth:
"It's like I've died and gone to heaven."***

The anointing at our baptism (water and word) is confirmed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Whether visible by dancing tongues of flame, or felt as a holy wind of change, the Holy Spirit gives us truth to speak in all kinds of languages to every culture and people. The Holy Spirit is the only credential we need. Through sacramental living (which also means daily dying to ourselves), our hearts are filled with the Spirit, which informs our words and actions. Such good news compels us to spread the word.

***Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): The Truth Is What
Peace Is***

This truth the Holy Spirit gives us to speak is noticed. As we unleash this truth in our world, it has the power to break through the barriers of division, misunderstanding, and failure. We take a back seat to the gospel, and brush scorn aside. We speak love, forgiveness, and grace as only the Holy Spirit can. We seek unity, community in building up the body of Christ—not conformity. And, it is in community—built on love, forgiveness, and grace—where we find true peace. No matter what anyone else might say.