

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 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. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability (NRSV).

Today we celebrate Pentecost. You know the story; Jesus died, was resurrected, and made a promise. “I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). They were all together in one place when suddenly from heaven a great sound as if it were a rush of a violent wind filled the entire house and divided tongues as of fire rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit that enabled them to speak in other languages as the Holy Spirit gave them ability.

Pentecost is one of three major festivals that the law required every male Jew living within 20 miles of Jerusalem to attend. Men living further out were expected, but not bound by law, to attend the celebrations of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The Old Testament day of Pentecost occurred on the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week (Lev 23:15-16). It was also called the Feast of Weeks (Dt 16:10), the Feast of Harvest (Ex 23:16), and the day of firstfruits (Nu 28:26). Pentecost is a Jewish holiday to celebrate the food and give thanks to God for the harvest. The New Testament Pentecost celebrates the birth of the church.

On Pentecost Sunday we traditionally focus on the language and receiving the Holy Spirit as a means to empower communication. The Holy Spirit gave them the ability to carry forward message. With language being a barrier to carry the message globally, The New Testament Pentecost acts as the antithesis of Babel. I am sure you know the story. The whole world had one language and the people in Babylonia built a tower to make a name for ourselves. The Lord confused their language and scattered them over all of the earth. We are taught the story when we are young but fail to learn that the root of the sin is selfish ambition. The New Testament Pentecost undoes the consequence of Babel. Speaking gibberish language that others cannot understand is not biblical. Pentecost is not a matter of confusing language; that is public displays of piety and is the same sin of selfish ambition that Jesus condemns. The hypocrisy that Jesus condemns is the religious attitude that puts their show of spirit on public display. This false piety is not for the benefit of others, but for their own sense of pride and ego as if it is achieved through a spiritual status. Speaking in tongues is the ability to talk in the native tongue of the pilgrims. The people came from all over the world talking in different languages. Now everyone can hear the Good News in their own native language.

What I see today in contemporary society is that a lot of people turn away from God. The few that are looking are looking for something that caters to them. Many claim piety and ignore the existing condition of humanity. It seems to me that this existing situation is eerily similar to the environment that Jesus faced 2 millennia ago. If Christianity actually followed the teachings of Jesus love, peace, justice, and unity would be worldwide. The problem is people claim Christianity but do not follow the teachings of Jesus even though Jesus warns us “The road is wide but the gate is narrow...many will

call me Lord Lord and not do what I say.” One lesson the Bible is clear on, when society fails to take the word of God seriously, that society will have serious problems. A detailed and complex problem that we have today is a biblically undereducated population that is unable to recognize its own hypocrisy. This results in war, hunger, homeless, and violence. Historically, Christianity has not followed the teachings of Jesus in regards to unity and love. The spirit filled person is not the one that publicly praises God but makes little to no effort to help the homeless, poverty, hunger, peace, and justice. The spirit filled person not only knows the will of God and follows the word of Christ. The spirit filled person is heart is broken over the human condition and works to help those in need. Each homeless person stumbled upon needs the love of Christ, funneled through a Christian, to them. The love of Christ is to be funneled through every Christian to the world around us. The world needs to see the love of Christ. The world needs to see the love of Christ at work in us and what we do is much more important that what we say. The spirit filled person loves God, appreciates God, and praises God. The spirit filled person does not turn a back on the human condition. Instead of judging and condemning, the spirit filled person helps and provides loving care.