

# Sermon: Pentecost

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Year B  
Acts 2:1-21  
Romans 8:22-27  
Psalm 104:25-35, 37  
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

For those of you who know something about photography... you may know that some lenses can focus only on things which are close... or only on things which are far... but not both... but a high-quality lens can focus in on subjects that are very close... and on subjects that are very far... here and there... shallow and deep...

And there have been people in my life... who have helped form me... who have helped me see both ways... people who have helped me move from a more myopic vision... to one that sees more broadly... to one which can focus on several focal points... several perspectives... people who have helped me embody... a little bit better... some of the values and truths I have discovered on the inside...

These people helped facilitate the discovery of these truths for me... they were not the truths themselves... but I became emotionally attached to some of them as though they were the truth... I regarded some of them as though they were the source of that truth... when truth really just came through them... and when they moved away... even though I now owned the new truths... sorrow filled my heart... because it felt as though... that truth was moving away too...

*I did not say these things to you from the beginning... because I was with you... but now I am going to him who sent me... and because I have said these things to you... sorrow has filled your hearts...*

The disciples had a deeply intimate relationship with Jesus the man... but Jesus wasn't just a man... he was also God... and the prospect that God was going to leave them... must have felt like abandonment beyond words... and because of that sorrow... that

grief... all they could focus on was the here and now... and not Jesus' promises... that's why he said... *It is to your advantage that I go away... If I do not go away... the Advocate will not come to you... because when the Spirit of truth comes... he will guide you into all truth...*

People move in to... and out of... our lives... and we can learn many things from each other... but the lessons and the truths... aren't the people themselves... the lessons and the truths... simply come through us... come from the Holy Spirit...

And listening to the Holy Spirit... being guided into all truth... helps us grow into the responsible individuals and communities... for which we were created... being guided into all truth does not make us autonomous islands... unaccountable to each other... but helps us see each other the way God already sees us... but when we resist that responsibility... we point fingers... we blame others... we say... *so-and-so told me to do it...* the way Adam did...

And what's interesting... is that while we can take lessons... make efforts... to improve our skills as photographers... and cooks... knitters and writers... painters and musicians... become better at a foreign language... maybe... at home brewing... at fishing... quilting... we can also set aside time... and make an effort... to become better at listening to the Holy Spirit...

John Shea wrote... the role of the Spirit is to hold together and defend the Father... Jesus... and the disciples... this defense takes the form of testifying to the truth... however... this truth is more than a correct accounting of the facts of Jesus' life by people who have been with him from the beginning... it is understanding and articulating the truth about Jesus' relationship to his Father-God... to the disciples... to all who seek salvation... and to the alienated world... and Jesus is aware that at the present moment... the capacity of the disciples to absorb the truth is limited... so he spares them "knowledge" that would overwhelm them...

The disciples in today's reading from Acts were filled with the Holy Spirit... and spoke in other languages... about God's deeds of power... those who accused the disciples of being drunk... may only have been able to focus on shallowness... and not depth... they may have been projecting... but the hidden nugget in this story... is that this was democratization at the highest level... the action of making something accessible to everyone... the miracle was not so much that the disciples could... all of a sudden... speak in other languages... the miracle was that all the truths about God's deeds of power... became available... not just to a privileged few... but to everyone...

And if you happened to watch the Meghan and Harry's wedding yesterday... you saw a reflection of these truths... a biracial woman marrying into the royal family... Gospel music... many people of color participating... and The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry quoting Martin Luther King, Jr. ... and speaking about God's love for all... *"Dr. King was right," he said. "We must discover the power of love, the redemptive power of love. And when we discover that, we will be able to make of this old world a new world. Love is the only way."*

Jesus as God's presence in the world... needs to be for the whole world to hear... in creating the church... God made all truth available to everyone... and in citing the prophet Joel... Peter reminded those present... that God would pour out God's Spirit on all flesh... and young men would see visions... and old men would dream dreams... the Spirit would turn a static lens... which sees only surface values... into an actively dynamic telephoto lens... which sees deeply... which sees God's love...

The German theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart wrote... *The eye through which I see God... is the same eye through which God sees me... my eye and God's eye are one eye... one seeing... one knowing... one love...* this seeing... reminds me about the importance of infant mirroring... of affirming the personhood of an infant right from the start... by prolonged gazing... the way lovers do... this validates the infant's emotions...

and this mirroring is motivated by love... and this is the way that God sees us... sight that can focus on our whole being... where we've been... and where we're going...

The 17th-century scientist and theologian Blaise Pascal... kept a folded piece of paper with him... a note... sewn into a hidden pocket in his coat... and scribbled on the page were intimate truths about God... including this line... *Christ will be in agony until the end of the world*... Pastor Isaac Villegas... of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship said... I would add that his agony is love... the anguish of Christ's spirit as he endures an unbearable separation from his beloved... his life straining toward his disciples... [and towards us...] on earth... his body pressing through eternity and reaching for communion with us... Pascal's hidden note to himself is called The Mystery of Jesus... that mystery is love... these are messages of love... given as gift by the Paraclete... messages of love... whispered by the Spirit... into our hearts...

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