

The Day of Pentecost – 2022

Genesis 11:1-9

Acts 2:1-21

John 14:23-31

There is one human race. Man was made in the image of God. Male and female has the Lord Almighty created us. There is a vast spectrum of gifts but we are one race. There is a broad palette of color, a range of abilities and interests and traits but we are one race, one people. Unity; as a child I fantasized about being some sort of catalyst for world-wide unity. The day that I was born, President John F. Kennedy gave a speech during the height of the Cold War. The speech was about unity. Communist East Germany had recently erected the Berlin Wall to prevent mass emigration to West Berlin. The city was divided. Speaking to an audience of 120,000 on the steps of city hall in Berlin Germany, Kennedy said this: “Two thousand years ago, the proudest boast was ‘**civis Romanus sum**’ (I am a Roman citizen). Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is ‘**Ich bin ein Berliner!**’ (I am a Berliner). All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words ‘Ich bin ein Berliner!’”

Freedom certainly resonates in the heart of man. Communism was then and continues to be a great threat to freedom. Political cause may bring people together for a time but there is something deeper to the unity of man than politics. Life itself is a shared reality. There is a unity to us that is intrinsic, inescapable. Some ignore it, and that is a form of self-harm. Some see clearly where our unity comes from and that is a phenomenal blessing. Jesus said this: “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). The Lord Christ is the catalyst of unity. His cross unites all men. All people will bend the knee when He returns on the Last Day. St. Paul wrote this: “There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

The people at Babel were idolatrous. They found a false unity in their pride. As they constructed their tower they were engaged in a religion of self. “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” (Genesis 11:4). God was not enchanted with their feeble endeavor. He takes action. Mercy is behind His action. He throws their language into confusion and sends them scattered across the land. How frequently has God curbed your pride? He is merciful. God’s mercy includes keeping us humble. Humility; God takes special pleasure in humility and sacrifice and fidelity and helping others in the faith.

I invite you to make a simple connection; make the connection between the ancient reading of what happened at Babel and our present darkness. What those ancient people at Babel were engaged in was a corporate sin. They derived unholy momentum from one another. Sometimes the sin of others emboldens us to behave badly. Our own faithlessness in turn fertilizes the seed of sin in someone else. Corporate sins are highly contagious in our age. Human curbs are few. The church, seemingly, stands alone. Our contemporaries are quickly building a tower, not to the heights but to the depths. Applause for this action is robust. Humanism, materialism, saftyism, twisted philosophies being peddled to children, tribalism, nihilism, and postmodernism

– we are awash in ideas that are antithetical to Christianity. Satan, your adversary, the devil, is a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). We know which part of the pack the lion attacks – the weaker part. God is not enchanted by our culture’s depravity, its faithless pursuit of self and rank emptiness and indoctrinating children in the same. What will our role in all this be? What does God desire of us?

Fifty days after Easter, a wind filled the entire house where the disciples had gathered. “Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). The Lord had promised; the Holy Spirit was going to be poured out. The rush of wind, the tongues of fire, and the reunification of language – it was Pentecost, the birth of the NT church. What was confused because of sin at Babel now was given Divine clarity. The Crucified Son of God is our tower of life. He reaches to the heavens with His righteousness. He delivers grace to the lowly sons of Adam, the lowly daughters of Eve. Easter is in full bloom on Pentecost. God’s Spirit delivers the resurrected Life of God’s Son and humanity is elevated to newfound heights.

People from all over the known world were in Jerusalem and all of them heard the richest Gospel ever spoken and they heard it from a motley band of Galileans – the Lord’s disciples. They all heard it in their own language. Humanity is united in Christ. His blood makes the many into one; one kingdom; one church; one people. There is no lasting humanity apart from the risen Christ and He shares all that He is with us, with any and all. Pentecost; fifty days after Easter the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the infant church and the new era of Christianity is born. The Holy Spirit, who hovered over the waters on the first day of creation, the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary and was the catalyst for the incarnation of our Lord, the Spirit, with which the Lord was anointed when He was baptized, the Spirit, which Jesus gave up in death on the cross, Jesus now pours out that Holy Spirit to inaugurate His church. The Lord and Giver of Life comes with a mighty wind and breathes the breath of Easter into the assembly at Jerusalem.

Pentecost is our unity. Christ’s blood is our unity. A holy cross and an empty tomb is our unity. The sacrament of our King’s body and blood is our unity. We celebrate this day. Nine young Christians, full of grace, they take their place within our congregation as communicant members of Christ the King Lutheran Church. This is no empty ceremony; this is a divine action. God is at work to build His church. Fresh, idealistic, innocent, pure and faithful – God has strengthened us, humanly speaking, by the confirmation of these believers. We are not like the culture around us that worships youth, we simply recognize that God uses the young to strengthen the mature – and vice versa. Unity; there is one church and the Lord Christ is the force to bring us together as one. We who are many partake of one loaf; we drink from one cup. We are bonded to one another. We belong to Him. The proudest boast of man is “I am a Christian; I follow Christ.” He is the One who humbled Himself unto death, even death upon a cross, that we might be strong, impervious to death, that we might never walk alone. We are united in this place. We share one Life.

What is our role in this world? What does God desire of us? Each of you will make your way, your own unique way, into the world as a vessel of light. God will lead you into your own station in life and you will manifest His goodness to those around you. You will fall. And God, through other Christians, will pick you up. This is your home. These are your brothers and

sisters. We are One in this place, unified by a shared faith, breathed into us by the Spirit of God. The universal language of salvation is spoken here. The glory of God manifests itself through Word and Sacrament and faith is strengthened. All of us have our pride checked by God's mercy. None are without sin and yet all are deeply loved. You will grow; in wisdom, in humility, and in understanding of God's Word. You will grow by God's Spirit, the Spirit that was given to you when you were baptized. Here we learn that every single human being is a child of God. Here we learn that sinners are forgiven through the blood of Christ. Here we learn what love is, what grace is, what eternal life is.

Love is contagious in this place. Christ's glory is contagious in this place. Momentum for living a beautiful life is found here, in one another's company, as we receive Christ and His teaching. Thanks be to God – He leads us by His Spirit. Thanks be to God – He adds to our number daily those who are being saved.