

“God Talk”

Acts 2:1-21 & Romans 8:14-17

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A priest, a rabbi and a pastor were standing by the side of the road waving a sign that read, “The End Is Near! Turn yourself around before it’s too late!” They planned to hold up the sign to each passing car. The first driver sped by and yelled, “Leave us alone you religious nuts!” From around the curve they heard screeching tires and a big splash. “Do you think,” said the clergywoman, “we should change the sign to say, ‘Bridge Out?’”

Life has numerous “bridge out” moments. Today we celebrate God who built an eternal bridge to us through the Holy Spirit. We celebrate that all people are God’s beloved children. God pours out God’s Spirit on each and every person. The Holy Spirit enables us to do much more than talk to each other. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand each other. When we understand each other, we grow in love for each other. When we grow in love for each other, we become united and joy flourishes. Together, joy filled, we discover how to be fully alive. Being fully alive reveals God’s glory and is worship.

Acts 2:1-21 MSG “When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them. There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn’t for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, ‘Aren’t these all Galileans? How come we’re hearing them talk in our various mother tongues? Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; Visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene; Immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; Even Cretans and Arabs! ‘They’re speaking our languages, describing God’s mighty works!’ Their heads were spinning; they couldn’t make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: ‘What’s going on here?’ Others joked, ‘They’re drunk on cheap wine.’ That’s when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: ‘Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren’t drunk as some of you suspect. They haven’t had time to get drunk—it’s only nine o’clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen: ‘In the Last Days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters; Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams. When the time comes, I’ll pour out my Spirit On those who serve me, men and women both, and they’ll prophesy. I’ll set wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, Blood and fire and billowing smoke, the sun turning black and the moon blood-red, Before the Day of the Lord arrives, the Day tremendous and marvelous; And whoever calls out for help to me, God, will be saved.’”

Ponder the magnitude of the miracle of that Pentecost. Different people, with different backgrounds, from different countries, worshiping through different religions, young and old, male and female, rich and poor, slave and free perceived the Holy Spirit, truly, fully, completely, compassionately listened and understood each other.

Each of us, every moment of our life has the Holy Spirit being poured upon us, breath fills our lungs and love blazes in our hearts. Each of us has the capacity, to be compassionate, to listen, to understand. God’s love is more than mighty enough to unite democrat and republican enabling them to understand each other, love each other, serve together and rejoice together. The same is true for citizen and immigrant, Brewers fans and Twins fans, for people from every religion and no religion, for people of all genders, orientations, and preferences. God has given all of us the compassion to come together. God has given all of us the ability to communicate.

Perhaps it is easier to talk about God today with the growth of political correctness. Judgement is a huge barrier. Want to shut down communication then tell someone they are wrong, inferior, and living in sin. Want to

damage a relationship then minimize another's hurt, pain, and tears. Want to alienate yourself then tell others that you have the answers for their life, that you know how God wants them to live. Want to separate from others then proclaim how the church you belong to and your religion is superior. Political correctness enables us to go deeper in our relationships to freely talk about God.

It is sort of like sharing a dazzling mountain top sunset. If the people were to argue over the best way to get there by hiking, biking, ATV, or vehicle; Debate the best mountain top snack; Discuss who should maintain the path, trail and road, how it should be funded, the preferred clothing, the best body posture; then the wonder of the sunset would be diminished.

I have only a few pictures of the spectacular places I have hiked, because my mental image captures more of the wonder and knows the journey it took to reach the vista which enhances the beauty. Frederick Buechner said, "Since the Reality that religion claims to deal with is beyond space and time, we cannot use normal space-and-time language (i.e., nouns and verbs) to describe it directly. We must fall back on the language of metaphor and resign ourselves to describing it at best indirectly." Our words, especially our churchy words create a barrier to sharing the glory of God, to understanding each other.

It is easy to politically correctly talk about God in ways that anyone can understand at work or school. Use I statements, to share a moment of love, joy, peace, transformation, or healing. Show a picture that rejuvenates you. Share a song that uplifts you. Explain how a piece of art transforms you. Journey with them to a spot in creation that fills you with awe.

The Apostle Paul was gifted in writing about God. Paul wrote with his audience in mind. When addressing a specific question, he used the vocabulary of those who asked the question. In these writings we find lots of churchy words. The Apostle Paul was politically correct when addressing diverse people, he used words, images, and metaphors that everyone could understand. In writing to the diverse Romans, he wrote, **Romans 8:14-17 NLT "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when God adopted you as God's own children. Now we call God, 'Abba, Father.' For God's Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are God's children, we are God's heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share Jesus' glory, we must also share Jesus' suffering."**

Probably everyone wants to be in a loving, caring, supporting, nurturing, encouraging family, to be chosen, to belong, to be appreciated, loved and cherished, to have nourishing communication and be certain that you will be a part of this family for eternity. This is the image Paul gives the Romans. Some biological fathers are awful. All fathers have flaws. God is like an adoptive father, the culmination of all the good traits of all fathers. Imagine the perfect father. God is even grander. God has adopted you and all people. We are empowered to call God "Abba", a personal name portraying God's personal delight for each person. Unfortunately, Paul lived in a time when men dominated. Thankfully we are realizing more and more that all genders are created by God and equally valued by God. Today Paul would likely write, "We call God parent." God shows us unconditional love and unlimited grace. Our value comes from who we are, not from what we do.

The Message translates Romans as: **Romans 8:15-17 MSG "God's Spirit beckons. This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike 'What's next, Papa?' God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who God is, and we know who we are: Parent and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance!"**

Elizabeth-Anne Stewart wrote, "Pentecost is the Feast of Possibility, a time of grace that reminds us that with God all things are possible. Pentecost calls us to believe in God's power, and to depend upon that power when our own is sadly limited. Pentecost reminds us that the Spirit of God brings life to dry bones, turns hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, opens tombs, shatters shackles, flings open closed doors, unravels funeral bindings, and raises the dead. When Spirit summons, those who were asleep wake up, finding life in the darkness, energy in their apathy, vision in their non-seeing, and mission in their unknowing. Spirit descends that we may ascend. She calls us out of boredom, out of mediocrity, out of fear, out of despondency, out of dullness, out of deadendedness."

Recently Leslie and I went through a season of grief, fatigue, and uncertainty. The Holy Spirit rejuvenated Leslie through scanning and organizing pictures. The Holy Spirit rejuvenated me through curling

up on the couch and watching Netflix which helped me process my feelings, work through my grief, and overcome a fear. What is the Holy Spirit calling you out of? How is the Holy Spirit rejuvenating you? Share that with others.

Barbara Brown Taylor said, “Many years ago, a wise old priest invited me to come speak at his church in Alabama. “What do you want me to talk about?” I asked him. “Come tell us what is saving your life now,” he answered. It was as if he had swept his arm across a dusty table and brushed all the formal china to the ground. I did not have to try to say correct things that were true for everyone. I did not have to use theological language that conformed to the historical teachings of the church. All I had to do was figure out what my life depended on.”

What is saving my life now? Being thankful and grateful the moment I wake up. Oatmeal with Wyman’s blueberries, medium rare steak from Borchardt’s and huge bowls of hot air popped popcorn with real butter from Midwest dairy cows. Bike rides. Sunrises, sunsets, stars, snow, trees, lakes, and mountains. Hearing Spencer laugh as he watches videos. Seeing Abigail’s passion in pursuing her dreams. Walking and talking with Leslie. Holding Leslie’s hand. Listening and encouragement from friends. Precious memories. Planning for an upcoming vacation. Seeing you worship and serve. Adventures; real, read, watched, and imagined. Listening to 80’s rock music and heavy metal. A good night’s sleep. Doing the laundry. What is saving your life now? Share that with others. Amen