

## “Blowing and Breathing the Language of Love”

Pentecost, Acts 2:1-21, May 31, 2020; 9:00 am  
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO  
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

### The Coming of the Holy Spirit

**2** 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.

**5** Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native

language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” **12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” **13** But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

### Peter Addresses the Crowd

**14** But 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. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup>'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.

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

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

<sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,

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

<sup>21</sup>Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

### **ACTS 1 –BEHIND THE STORY**

Since Easter, the disciples have been **Safer at Home**. **Acts** Chapter 1, right before what Merilee read for us today, tells us: "After his suffering, he **appeared** to them many times. Over a period of **40 days**, there were *many* convincing proofs that Jesus was **alive!**

And, while still *in* their midst, Jesus told them sternly:

"Do NOT leave Jerusalem. Do not defy County Order for Covid Retrixtions #314.96. But, DO wait here for the Gift–Capital G! The Promised Comforter and Counselor. The best gift *ever* to come!"

We find those disciples still **clueless**, still huddled in fear. Still waiting and watching for a **violent** kind of **takeover** by Jesus—a **military** intervention—as if violence is *ever* a true means of salvation. A way to solve anything.

“Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Jesus gives a resounding “Nope! We’re NOT doing it that way—the way of the world and its belief in military might. You are going to receive Power, yes! But, it’s **different** kind of power. And, when you do, you’ll draw the circle wide and broadcast—not a violent takeover—but my LOVE for all people—all over the airwaves and the world! To the ends of the earth. A different kind of takeover for sure!

And, right as he said these words, while they were standing there, they watched him **ascend**. And heavenly messengers appeared –men in long, white robes—and gave them a hard time for being ‘so heavenly-minded they weren’t any earthly good!’

“Why are you looking to the sky? Why are you waiting for the stay-at-home restrictions to be lifted? You’re about to receive the Power! The very Presence of God! Right here and now—it will descend upon you and reign among you more profoundly than anything you’ve ever known!

“Then they returned to Jerusalem.” Oops! I thought they were told by Jesus to stay put! They, obviously, didn’t obey the Stay at Home Orders. Or Jesus!

They’d been gathered at the Mt. of Olives—for a much-needed picnic perhaps? “They all joined constantly in prayer,” it says, “along with the women.” (Glad the women get mentioned.) 120 believers in their tribe; gathered for a continual Prayer Meeting—well beyond the 10-person limit.

And, for their final act of business Post-Easter, The Nominating Committee gets together to pick a replacement for Judas. It seems he had left his committee role in a rather **unceremonious** way!

### **ACTS 2 – PENTECOST EVENT**

<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

And thus, we get to the **Main Event**. The Day of Pentecost. They are “all together in one place. At home. Under lockdown. **Not** at church, but BEING

the church, **right** where they were –right where they find themselves.

And suddenly, tongues of fire appear, and *separate* and blow where they will! **Out of control**, it seems! Out of the disciples’ control, anyway! It was no longer just “their little club.”

The world **changed** on that day. They began to understand languages and cultures that were not their own. To speak, to see and to hear **differently**—to open their eyes, ears and hearts in ways they had never before imagined!

And then—it was no longer *them* doing it—but “as the Spirit enabled them!” And the broader circle, the “God-fearers” who were outside their group watched from the sidelines on You Tube, in amazement!

Who ARE these locals! How are they speaking so fluently in all these languages?! And this new, universal “Language of love?! They must be **drunk!**

### **LANGUAGES APLENTY!**

But *are* they?! Are they drunk, or have they learned a new language down in their depths? **Beyond** what they’ve imagined and proclaimed before. Are they swirling in the **wine**, going in circles, stuck in their same places and thoughts? Or, are they becoming “the Church”—**called out** from their homes and their

everyday lives—in lockdown or not—with an amazing message to give—straight from God?

***Love in any language.*** Love in *many* languages! Fluently spoken here. God promised to “pour out my Spirit” upon them and God’s promises have come true! And God is in charge—giving them the ability to blow the breath and burn the flame in new ways. For, it’s God’s **prerogative** to stretch the lines, widen the circle, break the rules!

EVERYONE who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. In their OWN language. However *they* call on the name of the Lord; what they call God’s name and Being. It might be different than how we describe God. Might not sound like OUR name for the Holy. OUR way of expressing the Presence of the Divine. Might not be our “God in a Box”—the one we have created in our own image!

There are no limits on this Wild God of Pentecost. On the Spirit –blowing where and how it will! No regulations or restrictions on how the Holy One wants to be made known; **express** himself or herself—and certainly, no limits on how God might be **described**—for God is **far beyond** our human limitations of gender and language.

## BREATHING ON OUR OWN

And how IS it that we **hear**, each of **us**, in our own native **language**?

How do we each hear God speaking to us “in our hearts?” How do we recognize the Voice, when it comes to us, in a way that we can understand?

The Greek word for Spirit is “breath.” *Ruach*....It actually takes breath to say the word! To name the Holy Spirit. We recognize the Voice, the Presence, because it is in our very **breath**. What we need to live, to exist, to be. God is our life breath—breathing upon us and out from inside us—our very core and life energy. *Ruach*.

We’ve heard a lot about BREATH, of late. About the **need** the breathe. How every soul must be *free to breathe*, to live and move and have our being—in God our Maker. Heartrending messages from ICU come to us from loved ones gasping for breath, struggling to breathe on respirators in this Covid pandemic. Unimaginable sights and sounds scream out of our news screens of those being denied the basic human right to breathe. It’s heartwrenching and angry-making all at the same time!

Where do we need to **feel** the breath of the Holy Spirit upon us, and to be “filled with the Spirit” in passionate

ways to grant that breath to others in our world? How can we “be the breath-filled change we wish to see in the world?”

## OTIS MOSS -- SYMPHONY

Rev. Otis Moss III preached a powerful sermon last week in his moving worship movie: “The Cross and the Lynching Tree: A Requiem for Ahmaud Aubery”—the young black man who was gunned down while out jogging, and the murderers were not arrested until 8 weeks later when a social media windstorm demanded justice.

Moss’ message urges us to “**go outside our frame**” with our faith. And our very lives and what we devote ourselves to. To push outside the box, the boundaries, the neat circles we try to stay within; the “safety nets” we keep falsely drawing for ourselves.

THAT is the message of Pentecost—the Birthday of the Church. A call, in worship and community, to **celebrate** the turning over of every **table**, and preconceived **boundary**. To have faith that Spirit wants to transform **us** and our world. To break apart our boundaries and borders.

Moss proclaims that if we have faith and hope and pursue a transformative, frame-expanding faith and boundary-busting love, ALL of God’s Children will

come together, to make a beautiful **symphony** of humanity!

Whether:

Black or White

Muslim or Methodist

Asian or Atheist

Latino or Lutheran

Presbyterian or Pentecostal

Protestant or Catholic

Jew or Gentile

Queer or Quaker

Agnostic or Anglican

Baptist or Buddhist

Hindu or Holiness

Ghetto or Country

Sikh or Sanctified

Redneck or Reformed

Urban or Suburban!

When the Church truly becomes such a symphony, finally, then, we will be **“free at last!”** Free at last, to Be the Church. Be the Breath. Be the love of God in Christ.

### **EN-SPIRITED to be FLUENT**

Are we drunk? Are we crazy? Had too much wine in these crazy times? Too many weeks in quarantine,

stuck at home, struggling to make sense of the county, state and national “orders” on our lives and organizations? Are we crazy trying to understand others who choose to approach this time and the rules differently? Who choose to rebel rather than retreat?

Are we stuck in Jerusalem, huddled in fear, clinging to OUR tribe; OUR experience of God and OUR limitations on lessons learned from the Risen Christ in our midst? Or, are we “poured upon”—awash in the power and love of God? Breathed upon in fresh and freeing new ways by the Holy Spirit—the greatest Gift ever given—then and now?

Are we EN-spirited, empowered and encouraged right now—in this moment—in THIS stage of COVID19—whatever it is today or tomorrow—to spread the love of God?! To blow a new breath of amazing acceptance, freeing forgiveness and powerful prophecy of unconditional, ALL-inclusive love?

Fluently speaking, breathing, on fire for God and neighbor – all our neighbors—anywhere and everywhere. Love in ANY language, creed, calling, experience and exponentially exploding—fluently spoken here!