28 May – 3 June 2023 Speaking your language

Read the passage from Acts 2: 1-21 It is written below.

### The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

**2**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2**Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3**They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4**All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A1-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26954a)] as the Spirit enabled them.

**5**Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6**When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7**Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? **8**Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? **9**Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A1-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26959b)] **10**Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11**(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” **12**Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

**13**Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

### Peter Addresses the Crowd

**14**Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15**These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! **16**No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

**17**“‘In the last days, God says,  
    I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
    your young men will see visions,  
    your old men will dream dreams.  
**18**Even on my servants, both men and women,  
    I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
    and they will prophesy.  
**19**I will show wonders in the heavens above  
    and signs on the earth below,  
    blood and fire and billows of smoke.  
**20**The sun will be turned to darkness  
    and the moon to blood  
    before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.  
**21**And everyone who calls  
    on the name of the Lord will be saved.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A1-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26971c)]

**Bible notes**

Jesus speaks at the joyful climax of the Jewish festival of Sukkoth (‘Tabernacles’, sometimes called ‘Booths’), which commemorated Israel’s living in rough shelters during their time in the wilderness. During the festival, water was drawn from the nearby Pool of Siloam and poured out in the Temple courts to recall God’s gift of water to his thirsty people, and prayers were offered for rain. Jesus’ words draw on Israel’s Wisdom poetry, which compares God’s wisdom with flowing water (Wisdom 11:4; Sirach 24:30-32). There are also echoes of his earlier conversation about ‘living water’ with the Samaritan woman in John 4:13-14.

For the evangelist, Wisdom’s gift of water and Jesus’ offer of living water symbolise the Holy Spirit given by the glorified Jesus (v.39). The Scripture reference in verse 38 is impossible to identify, and its meaning is ambiguous. From whose heart does the living water of the Spirit flow – the believer’s (suggested by John 4:14)? Or Jesus’ (John 19:34)? It might be both: the Spirit flows from the heart of the lifted-up Jesus, to bring life-sustaining joy to a community experiencing the wider world’s hostility (16:1ff). Once again, we see signs of the Spirit’s global reach, as its waters flow from the risen Jesus through Jerusalem to the world of a Samaritan woman and beyond.

**Reflection**

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

‘You can’t see God with your eyes, only with your mind,’ protested the eight-year-old to her teacher, when the class was asked to draw a picture of God. What happens if we regard Luke’s account of the day of Pentecost as a word picture, and let it speak to our imagination? It says to me: ‘God is like noisy wind, like tongues of fire.’ What do you see here with your mind? Anything from awe to terror. It says to me: ‘God is like one who speaks your language.’ What are the pictures of God that appear in your mind in response to these phrases?

**Questions for reflection**

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**Questions**

* Looking at the map, what strikes you about the crowd on the day of Pentecost?
* What does it feel like to hear people speak in way that really connects with you?

## What might a global vision of Pentecost mean for your church?

## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

A prayer of thanksgiving

At Pentecost, we give praise to you, Almighty God.  
For the glorious gifts of your Spirit:  
**we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.**  
For dreams and visions of life, light and truth:  
**we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.**  
For tongues of fire and gleaming light:  
**we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.**  
For lightening dark corners in our lives:  
**we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.**  
For warming our cold hearts:  
**we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.**  
For all you enable us to do and so much more:  
**we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.**  
For the frisson of excitement your Spirit brings:  
**we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.**  
For the comfort the guiding the support it offers us:  
**we give our heartfelt thanks and praise.**  
**Amen.**

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

Loving Lord,  
thank you that you speak to us in language we understand.  
With love and grace, forgiveness and hope in our hearts,  
help us to speak to others – with or without words –   
so that they might hear you speaking through us.  
**Amen.**

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