

## Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

*“What Does This Mean?”*

## Epistle Lesson

Acts 2:1-17 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <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.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” <sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

<sup>14</sup>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.

## Sermon Focus

This week the sermon was about how the Holy Spirit empowers us to witness to God’s love. The abundant way that God pours the Spirit upon us can be perplexing and sometimes elicits skepticism; it is hard for us to believe that God is so generous with God’s Spirit. And yet we have seen the outpouring of the Spirit empower the church during the “Season of Weirdness,” and so now we have an opportunity to witness to what we have seen.

## Discussion Questions

1. Did you participate in the #PentecostRed or #belongSTL hashtag on Sunday?
2. In the Pentecost story the disciples, beginning with Peter, realize what's going on—that the Spirit had been given to them. Why do you think it took them so long to understand what God was doing? Are we any better?
3. Luke says, "At this sound the crowd gathered." What sound do you think Luke was talking about? The wind? The voices? Did everyone respond to the same sound?
4. The crowd was amazed that this message could come from Galileans. Who is the least likely person you expect to hear the voice of God from?
5. The Holy Spirit was being poured out onto the world, empowering the disciples to use new languages to share God with others. Where have you seen this happen in history? Where has it happened to you personally?
6. Do you still feel connected to your church? What feels new and what feels old about that connection?
7. How do you witness Manchester UMC being the church right now, inspired by the Spirit?

## Bible Focus

In the same way that Maundy Thursday is said to align with the Jewish Passover festival, Pentecost aligns with the Jewish festival of Shavuot ("feast of weeks"). The word "Pentecost" means fiftieth, because there are 50 days between Passover and Shavuot.

Shavuot was the harvest festival for the Hebrew people. But, it was also the time when the Hebrew people commemorated and celebrated the giving of the law, or said more specifically the revelation of the Law on Mount Sinai to Moses.

And here we may begin to see the parallels of Pentecost—the giving of the Holy Spirit, the revelation of the Holy Spirit to God's people.

## Discussion Questions

1. How would you compare the giving of the Law to the giving of the Holy Spirit?
2. Our Bible story today reflects how God uses existing religious patterns and practices to make room for new ones. Where else have you seen God doing this?
3. Peter connected the Pentecost experience with ancient prophecy, giving meaning to the present moment. How have you connected present experiences to experiences of the past? How does that shape meaning for the present?

## Prayer

Holy Spirit, we thank you for your inspiring presence among us. We thank you for new expressions of church that astound and amaze us. We thank you for the wondrous ways that you speak in our language, talk directly to us, come in revelation like the sound of wind, and the excitement of a gathered community. Work in us, O God, to be your inspired people today and forever. Amen.

*If you think too hard about it, the church shouldn't be working as well as it is - church is "supposed to" look a certain way - it doesn't look like that, and hasn't for twelve weeks now.*