

120 People
Pentecost Sunday
May 31, 2009

“And they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.”

You just heard the Word of God proclaimed in other languages – Arabic, Finnish, Spanish, Latin, German, Hebrew and Greek. We just experienced a little bit of what the people at the first Pentecost experienced – the proclamation of the truth of God in other languages.

Who were these people who were filled with the Spirit and had tongues of fire resting on their heads? They were 120 of the disciples of Jesus. They were His inner 12 disciples, His brothers, His mother, Mary, His friends and those who followed Him. They were a small number of people. They were unknowns, Joe and Jane Average who made their livings with their hands, or were – in cases like Mary’s – dependant on others to take care of them and meet their daily needs. They were people you probably wouldn’t give a second glance to if you saw them on the street. They were the factory workers, the store clerks, the lobstermen, the waiters and waitresses of today.

And they were the ones who were used to turn the world upside down for Jesus.

They were the ones chosen by the Holy Spirit to go out into the world, starting in their own backyards, with the message of the Gospel of Jesus. They were the ones who took the great commission to heart: *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*

They taught about Jesus’ love, about His sacrifice to save them from eternal death; they taught His commands and taught people to obey them. They weren’t shy about what they experienced and knew. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit to reach out and do great things for their generation; to change the world one life at a time by the power of Jesus’ name.

And here’s the thing – so are we. No, let me make this a little more personal: so are you.

The same Holy Spirit that was poured out on Pentecost has been poured out on you and me in our Baptisms. The same power to proclaim the Gospel message, to tell people about Jesus and to teach them to obey everything He said both in His three years of earthly ministry and in the rest of His Word in the Bible has been given to you and me.

Listen, there are roughly the same number of people here today as there were in that upper room at Pentecost. We here today are comprised of men and women, younger and older, some with more resources, some with less; some with more schooling, some with less. There are some of

you who can do amazing things with wood, hammer and nails that I can only dream about. Some of you could give a Microsoft Certified Engineer a run for their money when it comes to understanding and working with computers. There are moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas, uncle and aunts, nieces , nephews and cousins here today. And everyone, no matter who we are, have been touched by the Holy Spirit and released in the world to turn it upside down in Jesus' name.

Sounds great! How do we do it? What does this mean for tomorrow?

It means surrender. It means getting out of the way of the Holy Spirit and letting Him have His way with us. It means stopping telling God what we think, and just listening to what God says.

It means letting God have His way, even if we don't like it. It means knowing God's Word and what His way *is* to know if we are getting out of the way so God can have His way!

It means what we talked about in the sermon series we just finished, Victory over the devil, the Five R's: asking to be refilled again and again with the power of the Holy Spirit and then turned loose on the world with His words, His life-changing power, His touch for those around us.

How do we know this is true? Let's go back to our Gospel reading: *Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come. He came at Pentecost and changed everything. He came at our baptisms and changed us from orphans to redeemed, adopted children. But we don't get to stay there.

I know I've mentioned this before, but allow me to say it again. Do you know what makes the Dead Sea dead? It's not the quality of the water that flows into it, it's the quantity of water that flows out of it. The Sea of Galilee to the North feeds the Jordan River. There are many creeks and streams that feed into the Jordan, and it all gets emptied into the Dead Sea to the South. And there it stays. What makes the Dead Sea dead, what makes it so there is no life in the Dead Sea so it reeks with the smell of death and decay, is that there is no outlet. The Dead Sea takes in all the fresh water, all the life it can, and doesn't do anything with it. If there were just an opening to the Dead Sea; if there were just a continuing flow through the Dead Sea, it would come alive. But because it just takes and doesn't give, it remains without hope for life. It remains dead.

The Holy Spirit has come! The Holy Spirit promised by Jesus has arrived! He came once at Pentecost, He came again at our Baptisms, and He comes again here today. He gives life and faith and grows us up in Jesus. But if we just stop at that point, we're not much more than

individual Dead Seas – lots of good stuff coming into us, but not going anywhere after that. And the consequences are others who don't get the benefit of what we've been given.

120 ordinary people. 120 Joe and Jane Averages turned the world upside down through the power of the Holy Spirit poured out on them at Pentecost. And they started right in their backyards.

120 ordinary people. 120 factory workers, store clerks, lobstermen, waiters and waitresses. 120 people who knew Jesus, and couldn't keep the news to themselves.

120 ordinary people. 120 men, women and children who were filled with the Holy Spirit on an ordinary morning while in worship.

120 people released into their own hometowns, their own places of work, their own social circles. 120 people touched with the power of the Holy Spirit, not caring what others would think of them for talking about Jesus.

120 people singing praises, praying and being responsive and sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

120 people... just about the number of people we have here today.

Will you please pray with me?

Holy Spirit, here we are. Here we are already filled with You. Here we are gathered by Your power this morning, brought into worship this morning by You, given faith by You. Here we are.

Move among Your people again today. Refill us again today and bring us to be the people *You* want us to be. Forgive us for getting in the way of Your work. Forgive us for putting our thoughts and feelings in the way of Your life giving instructions and words in the letters You wrote to us and put together in the Bible.

Touch us like You did our ancestors so long ago. Strip away all things that get in the way. Bring us to be the next "120 people" used by You.

In Jesus name,

Amen