

**Sermon: This is Us**  
**Scripture: Acts 2:1-13**  
**Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans**  
**Date: May 20, 2018**

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For the disciples of Jesus, to communicate what was happening to them and what in the world was going on with this whole Jesus experience meant thinking BIG. I mean, they had to think globally, cosmically, across massive swaths of human history to try and capture it. This wasn't a once-in-a-lifetime experience or once-in-a-generation thing, this was a hinge-point of history type-thing that happened to them, on the order of creation itself.

That's why some of them went back to the very beginning to try and explain it, to the very dawn of existence. In the beginning God said... God spoke the world into existence and the earth evolved across the millennia and then there was suddenly in the fullness of time the word of God become fleshly human in Jesus. They said: first there was the first human ever, Adam, followed by hundreds of thousands of human years and generations and then there was the new man, the new Adam, Jesus. And they went on... first there was the initial human murder of Abel by Cain then there were hundreds of thousands of years of human violence until there was the murder, of Jesus. They said first there was the flood that washed away the sin of the world, sparing only Noah, and then there was Baptism in Jesus' name, sparing us all.

And when they experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, this massive infusion of spirit and light and love-energy – the harnessing of the fire of love, as Rev. Curry beautifully put it at the royal

wedding yesterday – when they experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit, some spoke of the Tower of Babel, saying first there was humanity with one language building a great city and in the middle of it a great tower to reach to the heavens, a Tower of Power, a Tower of Pride, until God seeing what they were up to scattered the people across the earth giving them different languages (that’s the biblical myth of the origin of language).... and then there were millennia of human division and separation and rivalry until there was Pentecost in the fullness of time and instead of humans reaching up to the heavens with a pillar of stone, the heavens reached down in pillars of fire and instead of dividing people in their pride, the Holy Spirit of Jesus gave them the capacity to communicate across language divides, to unite in the love of the One God and voila! One humanity again!

Well, it’s not quite “viola!” we’re still working on that project of unity as Rev. Judy spoke of last week... taking two steps forward and a step back, two steps back and a step forward. But what is clear, what should be really clear after Pentecost, is what God means for us as humanity which is that we aren’t meant to be divided but united as one people!

As many of you know, my youngest daughter, Augusta Claire, and I went to Bolivia a couple of weeks ago to visit my cousin and so that she could do some volunteer work with Save the Children, Bolivia. My cousin, Mansir, and his wife, Daphne, who is the Director of Save the Children, Bolivia, have a 8-year old daughter name Celia. She is a lovely and energetic little girl who not only speaks perfect English but also Spanish and Portuguese, fluently. It was fascinating to watch her

interact with the local Bolivians in La Paz and Copacabana. They would assume this little blond-haired blue-eyed girl was from the United States until she began chatting away with them in Spanish with not a hint of an accent. Invariably their eyes would light up and they would seem to think, if not say right out, “oh, she’s one of us!” “Of course!” she would say or imply, “I am one of you, you are one of me! I am a Bolivian! This is us!” In fact, to get the full effect, I asked Celia to record something yesterday for us today and so here is Celia in sharing a few thoughts in Spanish and then I’ll translate – *play recording* - She said

*"Hello everyone, this is Celia Petrie from La Paz, Bolivia sending greetings to you there in Winchester, MA! I hope you are having a nice worship service and appreciating my uncle’s sermon! He’s great, right? - I told her to say that - Although we are 4,000 miles away, we are ALL God’s children and so you are my brothers and sisters in our one big human family. I hope to meet you one day! Take care!"*

If that little voice can’t convince us of our sisterhood/brotherhood in God then nothing can, right?!

Such connection across barriers of tribe and language and nation is what God intends for us and that’s why the people in Jerusalem on Pentecost that day were so moved as the disciples began to speak with them in their native tongue – “Wait a minute, you are one of us?” And the disciples said “Yes, we are one of you, you are one of us!” Christians today often seem to say “no, no, no, you are not one of us unless you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and THEN you can be one of us.” But for Jesus and his disciples it wasn’t like that at all. They were like, “of course you are one of us and we are one of you for we are all

one in the Spirit of God! That's the beauty of it, that's the glory of it! They were washed at Pentecost not by a Spirit of dividedness but a Spirit of unity. They were ignited not by a Spirit of divisiveness but a Spirit of love! It was a miracle, which helped them move more fully into the already-true reality that they all were one.

And so now we know that when we carry or seek a Spirit of unity and connectedness to one another whoever we are and wherever we are, we carry and seek the Spirit of God and when we carry or promote a spirit of separation and partition we carry and promote a spirit contrary to God, call it the spirit of malevolence or call it evil. Just because we attach Jesus' name to our attitudes of exclusivity and division or because we back it up with scripture verses, doesn't mean it's of God.... The Holy One breeds reconciliation and unification NOT division.

Where are the places in our own lives that we are tempted by the spirit of division and that we need to pray for the Holy Spirit of unity? An article in the Christian Century shares the work of Katharine Hayhoe, a Climate Scientist and Director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University. She goes around the country talking to climate change skeptics about the truth of human-caused global warming. Believe it or not she doesn't go with an attitude of "you science-denying idiots! Let me get you straight on this once and for all!" Rather she goes looking for place of commonality ... she goes listening to their questions and concerns, not – I might add - hedging on the truth of the matter... a spirit of unity cannot be accompanied by a spirit of falsehood, half-truths and alternative facts – no, she goes holding firm to the truth of the matter

BUT seeking commonality and connection, with a Spirit of Love. She says

We connect through our shared faith.... We connect over economic concerns, how clean energy creates many more jobs than traditional fossil fuels... For those of us concerned about our health we can connect the dots between the air pollution from fossil fuels and some 200,000 people who die every year as a direct result of this pollution... and perhaps most important we can talk about solutions, like the fact that Fort Hood, the biggest army base in the US signed a new contract for solar and wind energy because it will save tax payers over \$150 million dollars or that there are at least 6 cities in the US that are already using 100% renewable energy including Georgetown, TX.

She says to them we care about the same things; "I am one of you, you are one of me. This is us!"

That is the Spirit of God, the very Spirit that birthed the church so –duh! – it *must* be the Spirit of the church as well. We must foster unity within and around us to be serving the world as Christ's church. In so far as we create further division or allow divisions to fester we fail our mission and purpose.

So the choir is not failing us this morning, but bringing us right into the Spirit of the unity of Pentecost. For there is the language of classical music that for many people, touches the heart and make the spirit soar and there is the language of bluegrass music that speaks to other people, that touches their hearts, and has the capacity to make their spirits soar. What the composer Carol Barnett has done is created a mass that is inviting bluegrass people and classical people to know the unity of God and say to one another "hey, you are one of us, we are one of you! Who knew? This is us!" So praise God and let the music play!