

We Can Hear!
Pentecost Sunday
June 5, 2022
Pastor John Mars

Good morning church! Happy birthday! This is the birthday of the church. This is Pentecost. Today we commemorate that event that gave life and strength to the church. I want to read a passage of scripture. This is Acts, chapter 2, beginning with verse 1.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in their own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it each of us hears them in our own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

May God bless the reading of His Word.

A long, long time ago in a land far, far away, there was a little boy in my church who was born deaf. When I met him, he was probably eight-ish. He was a gregarious, fun-loving, social little guy. Never met a stranger. And despite his deafness, he was very, very, very comfortable in this little church and all the people there were his friends. And he became very adept at reading lips and communicating with us in his own way. I learned my name. This is my name. This is the sign for Pastor. It's two fingers in the shape of a C and you draw it across your neck, where a priest's collar would be, not like you are cutting someone's throat! That means Pastor. So, he would come up to me, making this sign, and he became my buddy. Time passed, about a year, and someone, I forget who, developed an implant and a technique that would cure his kind of deafness. Of course, immediately his family went to wherever it was that they did this procedure, and he had it done, and I will never forget the first Sunday he came back to church. He was just so excited! And he went up to every one of his friends to hear them talk, to hear them speak. And I said, "Hi, Adam, how are you?" And his eyes got this big! He excitedly made the sign for Pastor. And I remember when we started with the choir and the congregation singing for the very first time. The piano started and this little congregation of about 50 people and 10 people in the choir began to sing, and he was like, "Ohhh!" And he was looking all over the place and then, all of a sudden, he covered his ears because it was just too much stimulation. But still, his eyes were this big! I can only imagine how transformational this was for this little boy, hearing for the very first time.

Learning to hear the Holy Spirit can be life-altering. You train yourself to hear the Holy Spirit. Sometimes I wish God would just slap me on top of the head and pour stuff in, don't you? But that's not how it works. Generally speaking, you got to train yourself to hear God speaking. Today our passage is about people hearing the Holy Spirit. Let me set the stage for you. It was Pentecost. Now in our church we talk about Pentecost as if it is a Christian holiday. And yes, it is a Christian holiday. But before it was a Christian holiday, it was a Jewish holiday. It is one of three mandatory Feasts. It is also in scripture called the Feast of Weeks. Why the Feast of Weeks? Because it is a week of weeks after Passover. It is a week of weeks after Passover, so it is seven weeks after Passover. The weather is better. Traveling is better. And generally speaking, Jerusalem had more people in it at Pentecost than it did at Passover. It was a mandatory Feast, so you could not work, so everybody was in a good mood. That's the reason they asked about the wine. (That's supposed to be funny, but it wasn't!) It is a commemoration of the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was also a celebration of the first of the barley harvest that they offered to God. So it had a religious significant significance and a practical significance. The crowd was in a good mood. Jesus had ascended into heaven. One of the last things he said to his disciples before he left, he used a four-letter word. Did you guys know that? Jesus used a four-letter word before he went into heaven. Wait. Wait, one of my least favorite words. Wait. He said, "Wait in Jerusalem until you have received power. Then you will be my disciples in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the world. But wait until you receive power." This was the fulfillment of that. This was the infusion of power that launched the Christian Church. This was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and the fulfillment of Jesus' promise. In the Old Testament in the book of Joel, the writer says, "In the last days, on my children, on all flesh, I will pour out my Spirit. Your young man will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. And on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit." When Jesus was trying to comfort his disciples, He said to them, "I am not going to leave you as orphans. I'm going to send a Comforter. I'm going to send the Counselor and He will be with you always." Actually, the Greek word that is used there is "Paraclete." I remember it for myself by saying Paraclete, not parakeet. It's Paraclete, and the closest English word is lawyer. It's lawyer; someone to be with us in time of need. So, this is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. It is a fulfillment of Jesus' promise. Now why the wind and fire? Why the manifestation of wind and fire? I'll tell you why. Throughout the Old Testament, God is symbolized in wind and fire. In Hebrew there's one word for wind, breath and spirit. It's all the same word: "ruach," wind, breath and spirit.

Now, this is a commercial. This is a bonus. I want to give you something neat to take home with you today. Do you know what God's formal name is? I heard somebody say it. Yahweh. Do you know what Yahweh means? Yahweh means to inhale and exhale. Yahweh, Yahweh. Every time one of God's creatures takes a breath, they're saying the name of their Creator. Isn't that neat? So, if you want a nice little time of respite and centering on God, try that. Yahweh, Yahweh. Commercial over.

Fire and wind represent God, and at that moment at Pentecost is when the Holy Spirit manifested itself in a different way. Sometimes my profession talks as if the Holy Spirit came into existence on Pentecost. That is not the case. The Holy Spirit is co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son, but is manifested in a different way. Now in the

Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come upon people, particular individuals, for a particular task, for a particular amount of time, and then would leave. The difference is the Spirit of God is with us always. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is with you all the time. The disciples began to speak in different languages. Now do not confuse this with speaking in tongues. This is not what Paul talked about extensively in First and Second Corinthians. These guys were speaking in different languages, known languages that people could understand. They spoke in such a way that people heard the word of God in their own way in their own language. They proclaimed the truth boldly in the face of those who had just killed Christ. Now, I want you to think about this. Not only did they speak in different languages, they spoke boldly in the face of people who had just killed their Master. So, the power of the Holy Spirit gave them not only language to speak, but also the power with which to speak it. This is the effect it had on the disciples. What effect did it have on the hearers? The hearers were able to hear the good news in their own language. Now, I want you to think about something. Not only was the Holy Spirit enabling the speakers to speak in a way that people could understand, He was enabling the hearers to hear the message. I wonder. I wonder. This is just me wondering. I'm wondering out loud and I want you to wonder with me. I wonder if the Galileans were all speaking Aramaic and the Holy Spirit was enabling people to hear in their own language. You ever thought about that? See, the Holy Spirit was enabling people to hear the message to give and was enabling the people to hear the message they needed to receive. Right now, some of you are wandering. I mean that literally; your minds are wandering. You're not here. Your minds are wandering. I used to be offended by that because I can tell when you check out. Now, some of you are far enough away, I can't tell. But some of you are close enough that I can tell when you check out. You know what I found out? There's a lot of times that God takes people on their own journey. God gives them what they need at that time. That's what was happening at Pentecost, that He was enabling the speakers to speak the word of truth boldly that the people needed to hear and He was enabling the hearers to hear what they needed to hear. Now that's cool. The Spirit enabled them to hear God's message for them, personally, what they needed, and over 3000 people were saved that day. The effect of hearing the Holy Spirit can be life-transforming. You hear in a way that is appropriate for you.

Let me pause here for just a moment. I keep on talking about hearing the Holy Spirit. I have never in my life heard the audible voice of God, but as surely as I am speaking to you today, God has spoken to me very concisely and very clearly. I know people who do hear the audible voice of God. God generally speaks to me through nature, through things that are going on in my life, through the scriptures, and through other people and things that happen in my life. That's how I hear. Hearing will be in a way that is appropriate for you. I'll give you a "for instance." I have never spoken in tongues, in an unknown tongue. I've never spoken in tongues. I speak southern but I don't speak in tongues. Okay? But I have heard people in this church speak in tongues. Okay? It's never happened to me because it's not appropriate for me. God will speak to you in a manner that is appropriate to you. So, ask God to help you to hear. He's not going to turn you into a freak. Probably. I would say that some of you are not that far from it now but it's okay. I did not say that! You will hear in a way that is a way for you to understand, for you personally. Now, there's a caution here. Sometimes when people

begin to recognize God speaking in their life, and God begins to show up and show out in their life and they're able to perceive God speaking to them, they get a little arrogant and they think that that's the way God does it. And they try to impose their way on other people. Don't you do that! At the day of Pentecost, people were able to hear in their own language, in their own way, in a manner they needed. And that's how God works. The Holy Spirit can give you boldness.

Have you ever asked God to enable you to hear? This morning, I'm going to ask you to do that. I'm going to ask you to ask God to enable you to hear in your own way. It's your birthright. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is with you right now. Ask God to enable you to hear in your own way, in your own life. And practice listening. Train yourself to hear God speaking. And do not put God in a box and say, "It's got to happen like this, Lord." Be open to God speaking to you in a manner that is unique to you. Let's pray.

Lord, speak. Your children are listening. Lord, give us eyes that see and ears that hear, that we may perceive You speaking in our life, in our minds, in our very souls. In Christ's name. Amen.