

Sermon for Sunday, July 29, 2018 - "The Spirit Speaks Every Language"

Global Church Sunday

"God So Loves the World" - Vacation Bible School Celebration

July 29, 2018

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Decorah, Iowa

Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Acts 2: 1-12](#), [John 3:16-17](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

Kids and everyone: Wasn't it cool to hear God's word shared in so many different languages? That was just a taste of what it was like on the Day of Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples that day, they were able to speak in all sorts of different languages.

That must have been so surprising to all those visitors in Jerusalem. They would have expected to hear Aramaic - the language most people in Jerusalem spoke - either that or Greek or Latin- the language of the powerful Romans who ruled Jerusalem. Instead, everyone gathered heard God's Spirit speaking directly to them.

The Holy Spirit doesn't only speak one language - the language that most people speak or the language of the powerful people. The Spirit speaks everyone's language. The Holy Spirit doesn't want everyone to be the same, but delights in all the languages and peoples of the earth. The Spirit even speaks in the languages of people we've been told to fear. As Keegan told us this morning - even in Arabic. Arabic is a beautiful language spoken by millions of peaceful people. Yet in our time, Arabic speakers are often mistaken for terrorists simply because of their language.

There are lots of voices in our world who tell us to fear whole groups of people based on their language, religion, skin color, or country. Voices that say some people and some languages are better than others; that tell us we should keep separate from people who are different, either that or try to make them like us.

The voices of fear, hatred and division are so strong in our world today. But the Spirit of God is stronger and more powerful. And as Acts says, the Spirit of God has been poured out on all flesh, on all people. The Spirit speaks still and now to all of us so that we might know God's deeds of power - God's work of overcoming everything that separates us from each other and from God.

The Holy Spirit often speaks now in less dramatic fashion than on that day in Jerusalem, but the Spirit still speaks. All of you Bible School kids talked about that this week with Kathryn. You walked around the church and the grounds during Bible School and Kathryn asked you to point out all the ways and places God's Spirit of love still speaks. You said the paraments, the baptismal font, the communion rail, the hymnal, the piano, the church garden, the trees, the solar panels, the food at Fellowship Hour and so many other things.

The Spirit still speaks to us in ways we can understand to help us know God's powerful love.

The Holy Spirit also helps us to speak of God's love in ways that other people can understand.

Too many people have gotten the message that God uses the language of power and domination. So, God works through us to let others know that the Spirit speaks their language, that the Spirit understands them and is present with them, that the Spirit speaks to their lives and fears and hopes.

The Holy Spirit also helps us to speak God's language of love and reconciliation, to give voice to God's alternate reality in this world full of division and hatred. The Spirit helps us to speak of God's dream for our world - God's dream that all people would come together, in all our diversity, to live in love for God and love for one another.

The Spirit calls us all to dream this dream and to tell about it, to be God's prophets. Prophets are those who tell of what God is up to in the world, who speak of God's dream in a world of sin and brokenness.

God tells us, in the books of Joel and Acts, "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. Today we are seeing that happen as the children of this congregation prophesy to us and help us to envision God's dream!

The Spirit of God has been poured out upon us. We have what we need to speak God's language, to speak words of love and reconciliation.

May we know that the Spirit is speaking to us today.

May we open ourselves to the Spirit speaking through us.

