

A Sermon Preached at Maple Street Congregational Church, UCC
Danvers, MA
Rev. Kevin M Smith
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Acts 2:1-21

They're Speaking Our Language!

Jewish people from all over the place were in Jerusalem for the celebration of the Feast of Weeks. This was a major holiday following Passover in which the Jewish people celebrated the first fruits of the harvest and also the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. It was a big deal in the life of many of the followers of a Jewish prophet, rabbi, and holy one called Jesus of Nazareth who had been crucified for sedition by the Roman Empire, their occupiers and oppressors. It was a time for Jewish people who remembered their liberation from Pharaoh, another oppressor, and the even deeper, more profound liberation from idolatry and immorality. The giving of law of Adonai or God was not a new kind of oppressor, but rather, provided a way to live that would enable God's people to live free of behaviors that damaged relationships.

The people who had become the followers of Jesus Christ caught fire that day! Without any sign or warning, all of sudden these people who were still mourning the loss of their spiritual leader and friend experienced tingles running up and down their spines as a great rumbling and rush of wind pervaded their very beings right down to their cores. Jesus Christ was sending a permeating, all-encompassing, all liberating Spirit of love—a love so immense and unconditional—that they had never experienced. All they had experienced on the highways and byways of the Galilee, and in Jerusalem, with their beloved friend Jesus suddenly became so much more than just following, more than just learning, more than just a memory, more than just their doubts, their fears, their bewilderments. In the blink of an eye, that probably seemed like an eternity, these individuals became infused and joined and melded together into the actual physical, eternal body of Christ on earth. Suddenly they realized they had become the physical and spiritual manifestation of Jesus Christ upon the earth and a sacred, Holy Spirit, filled their lungs, hearts, brains, and limbs with the greatest love that exists.

Phew. The church of Jesus Christ was born. Happy Birthday church! Happy Birthday people of Maple Street Church! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

This was no exclusive discriminating Spirit either. This was a Spirit that was so open and available and affirming to every kind of human being and creature of the earth that people in Jerusalem that day suddenly felt these folks were “speaking their

language.” With all their cultural differences and bias against each other suddenly all these folks who spoke different languages were experiencing people who they may have looked down upon who were now speaking their language.

Oh, if the world today with its Muslims, Jews, Christians, Agnostics, Atheists, and all the other religions and ideologies could hear each other speaking their language! If all the people of the world who share so much DNA, who all bleed red blood, who all need water to drink and air to breath could speak each other’s language. If they could all speak the language of love rather than hate, the language of inclusion rather than exclusion and racism, sexism, and fear of difference, the language of generosity rather than scarcity and the “I’ve got mine, you get your own,” language—language of selfishness and self-centeredness. If only humans and the flora and fauna of the earth could speak the same language! What could the oceans or rivers tells us? What would the spotted owl and the cod and the salmon, and the osprey tell us? What if we could speak the language of the butterfly?

My friends, this world that we inhabit today is in need of another Pentecost, another liberating Festival of Weeks where God gives us and we receive the liberating law of how to love one another in the midst of our differences. What if we called it diversity rather than difference? What if you and me celebrated our different tongues, celebrated the colors of our skins, celebrated the whole beautiful range of sexual orientations, celebrated the stages of our lives young and old, celebrated that we all are not like-thinking autobots? Thank God this not a monoculture world, we would all be bored to death. In fact, the scientists all know that biodiversity and complexity makes for healthy ecosystems. It’s when diversity disappears that life is threatened.

Let us pray...

Precious Lord pour out your Spirit
on every kind of people:
May your daughters and sons prophesy,
May we experience and see your vision,
May all ages dream dreams.
Let the time come when You
pour out your Spirit of generosity and love
On these your servants.
There are wonders in the sky above
and signs on the earth below,
Blood and fire and billowing smoke threaten the peoples of the world,

the sun turning black and the moon blood-red when our differences incite
war, racism, discrimination and hatred,
May the Day of the Lord arrive,
the Day tremendous and marvelous;
We call out for help
Help us to speak each other's language and
Celebrate each others hearts all of which are created by You.”
Amen.

