

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: Some Sermons Mike wants to Preach before he leaves!
Sermon: Woke or Awake?

Acts 2:1-13

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

I Corinthians 12:4-6; 11-12

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. ¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

Sermon

This past weekend we were at Seaside enjoying the beach, since we are moving away from the coast in a month - get as much ocean that we can get. The Idaho coastline is not as pretty as Oregon's, truth be told. When the big one hits, Boise may be on the coast, we'll see. But we were in line for the carousel and the pipe organ was playing the old familiar tunes in the background, and a tune came on that made me perk my ears up a little bit. It was a song that grew out of the old minstrel shows of yearsteryear, most commonly performed by folk in blackface - also a song mostly associated with racism and the grey. Music teachers today are rethinking many songs they teach that have problematic history. Disneyland is changing rides. The pirates of the Caribbean no longer shows them selling brides. Splash Mountain is getting a total overhaul for many reasons.. Sleeping beauty may lose her kiss because she didn't give consent. We are certainly living in an age where old ideas are being rethought. Not that we are trying to erase our past, but maybe atone and fix what is insensitive. The word of the day is "Woke". Pastor Mike, is our church "Woke"? I had that call a while back. Are we Woke? Honestly, I have no idea. Our Conference is trying addressing racism in an intentional way. As a reconciling congregation, we want to let everyone who is called live out their calling. Are we woke? What you think that word means and what I think that word means are probably miles apart. In our culture wars there seems to be no middle ground. Some take woke to mean that some are totally trying to dismantle our history and traditions. Burn it all to the ground and death to anyone who opposes. Very closed minded in their open minded ness! Or another group is trying to keep our culture and norms as is and tell others to just deal with it. Now, none of these are particularly helpful. But I like to think that Woke is just a play of the verb awake. Awakening. To be

made aware. Woke, Aware and Awake come from the same root. You're awake, or your sleeping. You're aware, or your eyes are closed - metaphoriacally speaking. Are you Woke, or Awake?

Why can't we go back to the good ol days when we just got along. Well friends, that time and place probably never happened. Even in the Bible, there were splits and fights and grudges. Paul, speaking to the church in Corinth, is trying to break up similar petty jealousies. Who has the better gift; prophecy, speaking in tongues, working miracles? Paul says quit your bickering. Each of us has gifts but we don't have the same gifts. Each of our gifts are important to the work we do in spreading the kingdom. No one gift is better than another. We need to recognize our gifts and use them for the common good. We need to recognize the gifts in others and see their contributions.

Let me share with you a little blasphemy. (Not really, but some might think it is). The kingdom of God is diverse with people of different languages, different heritages, and we even have different thoughts and ideas. In the Corinthians passage, we see the Spirit working through us, freeing us to be unique and different. The Pentecost experience that we read in the book of Acts isn't much different. On this day the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples in a dramatic way. People from all around know something is happening. It sounded like wind. It looked like divided tongues of fire. The sound of the Holy Spirit was so loud that the people gather to see what was going on. They are confused not only by this loud sound but because they hear the disciples speaking in other languages; their own native languages.

The Holy Spirit brought a diversity of language to a relatively homogenous people, the disciples. How can these Galileans speak our native language, they ask. The Spirit brought this gift to increase the church. But this increase it not just the numbers of people; we see an increased diversity of people, people from all around the Roman Empire. These are non-Palestinian natives. Immigrant people speak in native tongues that are not the same as the city they live in. But even through the power of the Holy Spirit, this diversity is not unified. These are just the words of drunkards, some say. And to which Peter protests. The message that is being shared is not heard by all the people in the same way, even if it is in their native language.

Pentecost is typically thought of as the birth of the Christian Church. This proto-Church is a Church of immigrants who speak different languages from different countries. The Holy Spirit and the Church honors the diversity and individuality of the people. We are not all alike nor do we have to be alike. As we see today, God speaks to people in different ways.

If we distill what the gift of the Spirit did for the disciples on that day, we see that it allowed them to be evangelists. It allowed the disciples to go into the community in which they lived so that they can speak to people they did not know. They didn't just speak to people like themselves. They spoke to people who were different from themselves. In this one day, the church went from being a few hundred people to a few thousand people.

The Spirit LOVES Diversity. And I pray that our church embraces this kind of Kingdom of God. I know the world is changing. And I hope that we are aware or awake enough to see how the Spirit is moving in this day and age. Are we woke? I don't know. But I pray that we are awake. Awake enough to see how each of our gifts can be used to bless each other. Awake enough to understand that when we know better, we do better. Awake enough to remember the hurtful parts of our history, and awake enough to celebrate our true callings to do kindness, love justice, and to walk humbly with our God. The Spirit came at Pentecost, and the Disciples were awoken to a new world. May we see the world in a new light as well. And the family of God said, AMEN.

Opening: At Seaside

Children's Time: At Seaside (water intake valve)

Prayer: Today's prayer comes out of the United Methodist Book of Worship. Read with me, if you would like.

God of wind, word, and fire, we bless your name this day for sending the light and strength of your Holy Spirit. We give you thanks for all the gifts, great and small, that you have poured out upon your children. Accept us with our gifts to be living praise and witness to your love throughout all the earth; through Jesus Christ, who lives with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever. Amen. From the Book of Worship

Let us join in the Lord's Prayer

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

THY KINGDOM COME. THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD, AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES,

AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US, AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION,

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL. FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM,

AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER AND EVER AMEN

Offertory:

Welcome to the Offering, our chance to give back. As United Methodists, we support many ministries, within the church, outside the church, at home and abroad. We are a giving people. Once a year, the Methodists have Heritage Sunday, on the third Sunday of May - to correlate roughly with the anniversary of John Wesley's Aldersgate Conversation date, when his heart was strangely warmed. It turns out that this year it also hits Pentecost Sunday, when the Spirit is also celebrated in Scripture. We are the oldest protestant church west of the Rockies. And we celebrate these past 181 years. From our historians of the past like Munro and Bennett, to Mike Smith our historian today, we have faithfully kept a record of the Methodist experience here in Oregon City. Come check out the Heritage Room (aptly named) that contains a few of our artifacts and binders of historical documents - thank you Mr. Smith. One document I'll share today comes from Anna Marie Pittman. Anna Pittman sailed around Cape Horn to be missionary in Oregon. She was asked, by Jason Lee, the pioneer missionary, to be his wife. Their wedding on Sunday, July 16th, 1837 was the first marriage of those of European descent in all of the Oregon country. It was not to last, however. 11 months later, Anna and her baby daughter died in childbirth - while Jason was away back East at the time, looking for more recruits. Anna and baby are buried in the Lee memorial Cemetery down in Salem. Anna was an accomplished writer, and back when Jason Lee proposed, she gave her answer back in poem. Which we have in the Heritage Room. Hear her answer, reminiscent of Ruth and Naomi out of the Bible:

Yes, where thou goest, I will go.

With thine my early lot be cast;

In pain or pleasure, joy or woe,

Will I attend thee to the last.

Thy people and thy charge be mine.

Thy God, my God shall ever be.

All that I have receive as thine,

My heart and hand I give to thee.

Thank you OCUMC. For your gifts help keep our history, and future, alive and well.

Closing: At Seaside