

June 9, 2019

Acts 2:1-21

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Book of Acts (of the Acts of the Apostle Paul) is written by the same author as the gospel story told by Luke. Many today think that the two books together form one larger book, in which the death and resurrection of Jesus is not the end of the story, but rather the middle of a larger story, the point of departure for the creation, vocation and work of the church.

the day of Pentecost: Shavuot (Hebrew: שבועות, lit. "Weeks"), is known as the Feast of Weeks in English and as Pentecost (Πεντηκοστή) in Ancient Greek. It is a Jewish holiday that occurs on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan, meaning it may fall May 15 – June 14.

Shavuot has a double significance. It marks the all-important wheat harvest in Israel (Exodus 34:22), and it commemorates the anniversary of the day when God gave the Torah to the nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai—although the association is not explicit in the Biblical text between the giving of the Torah (Matan Torah) and Shavuot.

The holiday is one of the Shalosh Regalim, the three Biblical pilgrimage festivals. The word Shavuot means weeks, and it marks the conclusion of the Counting of the Omer. Its date is directly linked to that of Passover; the Torah mandates the seven-week Counting of the Omer, beginning on the second day of Passover, to be immediately followed by Shavuot. This counting of days and weeks is understood to express anticipation and desire for the giving of the Torah. On Passover, the people of Israel were freed from their enslavement to Pharaoh; on Shavuot, they were given the Torah and became a nation committed to serving God. - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavuot>

in one place: The scene quickly changes from the a private house (we're unsure if it's the same "upper room" from Luke 24) where the disciples are gathered (in hiding?) to a very public scene on the street.

Tongues: In Greek, as in English, the word can mean both 1) the physical tongue in our mouth and 2) a language – a tongue we speak.

SPIRIT: " then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." In Genesis 2:7 the Spirit of God breaths life into dust and creates a human being. Here, the Spirit breaths life into a once cowardly disciple [Peter] and creates a new man who now has the gift of bold speech. (Willimon, *Acts*, p.32) In Greek the word **SPIRIT** means 1) spirit, 2) breath and 3) wind.

¹ When **the day of Pentecost** had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided **tongues**, as of fire, appeared among them, and a **tongue** rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy **SPIRIT** and began to speak in other languages, as the **SPIRIT** gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**" ¹³ But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you

suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that 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.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,

in those days I will pour out my Spirit;

and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,

blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What word, phrase or image grabs your attention?**
- **How do you (or have you) experience(d) the Spirit of God?**
- **How do the word of this story touch - our life as individuals and as the church here in Oakland - today?**

"WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?": A good speech can turn us inside out. Any good speech is more than *what* was said, and *to whom* it was said; it is also a matter of *how* is it said. (Willimon, *Acts*, p. 34, 35)

Peter responds to the questioning, murmuring and brouhaha of the crowd. He insists upon repentance and the gift of God, turning to call on the name of the Lord – something that throughout the book of Acts is always a gift of God.

³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." Acts 5:31-32

¹⁸ When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life." - Acts 11:18

Even as the Spirit is a gift, the repentance and forgiveness of Israel are also miraculous gifts. The story of Pentecost day began with the gift of the Spirit to the assembled apostles. Now the day concludes with the gift of reconciliation for those who heretofore stood on the outside. Taken in the context of Luke's narrative as a whole, this account of the conversion at Pentecost may be most significant as a piece of the larger story of the amazing growth of the Christian community. (Willimon, *Acts*, p. 35)

Our reading resonates (in terms of theme and specific word usage) with the story of God consecrating the traveling Israelite people at Mt Sinai told in Leviticus 19.

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. ¹⁹ As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. ²⁰ When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the Lord summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people not to break through to the Lord to look; otherwise many of them will perish. ²² Even the priests who approach the Lord must consecrate themselves or the Lord will break out against them." ²³ Moses said to the Lord, "The people are not permitted to come up to Mount Sinai; for you yourself warned us, saying, 'Set limits around the mountain and keep it holy.'" ²⁴ The Lord said to him, "Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you; but do not let either the priests or the people break through to come up to the Lord; otherwise he will break out against them." ²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and told them.