

Genesis 11

All people[a] on the earth had one language and the same words. 2 When they traveled east,[b] they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them hard." They used bricks for stones and asphalt for mortar. 4 They said, "Come, let's build for ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky, and let's make a name for ourselves so that we won't be dispersed over all the earth."

5 Then the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the humans built. 6 And the Lord said, "There is now one people and they all have one language. This is what they have begun to do, and now all that they plan to do will be possible for them. 7 Come, let's go down and mix up their language there so they won't understand each other's language." 8 Then the Lord dispersed them from there over all of the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 Therefore, it is named Babel, because there the Lord mixed up[c] the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord dispersed them over all the earth.

Psalms 104

24 Lord, you have done so many things!
You made them all so wisely!
The earth is full of your creations!
25 And then there's the sea, wide and deep,
with its countless creatures—
living things both small and large.
26 There go the ships on it,
and Leviathan, which you made, plays in it!
27 All your creations wait for you
to give them their food on time.
28 When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled completely full!
29 But when you hide your face, they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to dust.
30 When you let loose your breath, they are created,
and you make the surface of the ground brand-new again.
31 Let the Lord's glory last forever!
Let the Lord rejoice in all he has made!
32 He has only to look at the earth, and it shakes.
God just touches the mountains, and they erupt in smoke.
33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I'm still alive.
34 Let my praise be pleasing to him;
I'm rejoicing in the Lord!

Acts 2

When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of

them. 4 They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

5 There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. 7 They were surprised and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? 8 How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), 11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!" 12 They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, "What does this mean?" 13 Others jeered at them, saying, "They're full of new wine!"

14 Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, "Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! 15 These people aren't drunk, as you suspect; after all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! 16 Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young will see visions.
Your elders will dream dreams.

18 Even upon my servants, men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

19 I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.

20 The sun will be changed into darkness,
and the moon will be changed into blood,
before the great and spectacular day of the Lord comes.

21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.[a]

John 14

8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us."

9 Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I have spoken to you I don't speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Trust me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on account of the works themselves. 12 I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. They will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father can be glorified in the Son. 14 When you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

I won't leave you as orphans

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 I will ask the Father, and he will send another Companion,[a] who will be with you forever. 17 This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can't receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you.

25 "I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. 26 The Companion,[a] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you.

27 "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid.

Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit: Amen.

As you might recall, we've just begun a series of sermons will focus upon our mission statement, our purpose here as a Christ Lutheran Church, and in particular what kind of people God's calling us to become. To get ourselves in the right place, and to internalize this purpose that God's put before us, let's say these words together. As Christ Lutheran Church, we're *A fellowship living and sharing the love of God through worship, service, wellness, and hospitality.*

Now, I'm sure that a few of you might wonder whether this is the appropriate approach to take on a festival day like today. I mean, it's Pentecost Sunday! We're here to celebrate the coming of God's Holy Spirit to the church, the spirit of abundance that raises God's people to new life,

that restores God's image overtop of our sinfulness, that restores health to our broken bodies and lives. We're here to celebrate the birth of the church, the fire of God's life that we receive in baptism and that burns forever. Shouldn't we celebrate that instead of talking about some mission statement?

Fortunately for us, these aren't mutually exclusive options. We don't need to exclude Pentecost when talking about this mission statement, nor should we! You as a community declared that part of your identity was to "live and share the love of God." That's the story of Pentecost in a nutshell. The Holy Spirit falls on the church as she empowers and equips God's people to live and share the story of God's love seen through Jesus Christ. We may not be a Pentecostal church, but we've together claimed a Pentecostal identity based both in our lifestyles together as a church and our sharing of God's love outside these walls.

The Holy Spirit falls on God's people so that they can live and share the love of God. That's what we're here to do. That's who we're here to be.

When hear the story of the Tower of Babel, we might wonder why God made it come tumbling down like London Bridge. I think it's because we see a bunch of heavenly minded people that are just no earthly good. Whatever they're about, they're not about living or sharing God's love. They just want to get to heaven. And the sad part is, God's gifted them with unity. They're a people gathered around a particular language and purpose and goal. Maybe they're even a fellowship! But they're using those gifts for all the wrong things. God doesn't call us upward. God sends us outward. So God flattens Babel's hierarchy, dividing their languages and sending them out.

But the story doesn't end there. Pentecost is the end of the Babel story, for these people, once divided by

language, now have the gift of the Holy Spirit that unites not only their language, but their purpose, around a new promise. On this day in particular, we see God work through a miraculous gift, giving these faithful disciples the ability to speak foreign languages in order to tell everyone that they meet about God's good work in Christ's resurrection. In Jesus, God made that divine love known in person, and in the resurrection, we saw that nothing, not even death, would prevent God's love from coming to us. Pentecost is the moment where the Holy Spirit equips the church to go beyond just seeing the love of Christ and tells us live it for ourselves, to go share it with others. The Holy Spirit translates our words in to God's Word, shares our lives as God's life. The Holy Spirit gifts us with these tongues of fire so that, through us, everyone would know about God's love.

If we're called to live and share the love of God, we're called to speak with tongues of fire. Instead of constructing

grand cathedrals like Babel's tower, we're called to speak the name of Jesus, to live the life of Christ, to give the love we get from God. On Pentecost, we're sent away from the Tower of Babel, and even the Temple of Jerusalem, and even our own building, in order to welcome other's into this love that we're living and sharing.

What we're called to, what we're moved to in this, is to value others over ourselves. We're not necessarily called to speak our native tongues, but instead learn the languages of the world, the cultural trappings of all nations, so that we might tell them of the beauty and wonder of Jesus. Babel was all about self-aggrandizement, building ourselves higher and higher no matter the cost to anyone else. Jesus is all about self-sacrifice, lowering himself even to death so that others might live. It's no accident that Pentecost frees us and equips us to get beyond ourselves, to engage others in their home courts in their preferred method, to speak the

languages of those who need to hear about Jesus!

Pentecost means we don't need to be controlled by our personal preferences or typical habits. Instead, we're given the gift of liberty, of encountering others on their turf so that they too might become citizens of God's Kingdom. This is a day where we find value and integrity in all people, even if they don't look like us, sound like us, speak like us, dance like us, sing like us, pray like us, because the Holy Spirit is here, burning away all of our prejudice and empowering us with a new light that shines on all, a new warmth that beckons we all come close to the fire.

This Pentecost moment places before us the panoramic potential of what it means to live and share the love of God. If miraculous tongues of fire can descend on the heads of Jesus' followers, then nothing is impossible for us. How can we live and share the love of God? What we first must understand is that, as a community, we've already

identified four pieces of that for our congregational focus: worship, service, wellness, and hospitality. Those are our communal activities that act as conduits for God's love. That's the stuff that we do together. While that's good stuff, our focus today isn't on those communal commitments, but on how each of us is individually shaped to live and share God's love as individuals, as people. After all, each of us has a tongue of fire on our head.

Now, while we're not necessarily speaking in other languages, these tongues of fire are the unique translation tools that we each have that can help us carry out this commission of love to the ends of the earth. The tongues of fire may not look like this flame, but if we let them, they burn even brighter. We can only live and share the love that we know to be true ourselves. Even more significant, these are all different! No two flames are ever the same. Instead of Babel, where unity was based in speaking the same

language, in our Pentecostal identity we're given different gifts, different abilities, different skills to communicate the Gospel. Rather than our language, our commitment to God's love and God's story is what binds us together. Our unity is found in Christ's sending us, and we're each sent with different fires that burn bright the love of God. So, what does the love of God look like to you?

Living and sharing the love of God might be found for you in the love of God's creation. Caring for the earth, committing to recycling, reducing our waste, equipping us with the land, plants, and animals we need to thrive in this new Eden. Perhaps the fire that burns on your head is a fire that connects with all those who desire to care for God's creation.

Living and sharing the love of God might be found for you in the love of God's justice, advocating for people who society has silenced, feeding, clothing, and housing people

who unnecessarily face such needs in this land of abundance, flattening the Babel hierarchies in our society that we're all on the same level. Perhaps the fire on your head is a fire that connects with communities committed to bring God's intended equality to all people.

Living and sharing the love of God might be found for you in the love of God's forgiveness, not just in the ethereal proclamation of forgiveness on Sunday mornings but the living of forgiveness to bring reconciliation across divides of race and political party, across culture and gender identity, between victim and criminal, between all who are divided by the power of sin. Perhaps the fire on your head is a fire that reaches across lines of division to speak truth into all people.

Living and sharing the love of God might be found for you in the love of God's selflessness. We reflect Jesus' willingness to sacrifice his own life when we sacrifice of our

time to help elementary students who need help reading or some healthy support from adults in their lives. We reflect God's sacrifice when we give money that we could use on high end clothes or cable subscriptions or our daily Starbucks coffee to instead provide fellowship opportunity for people with disabilities through Across the Spectrum and discipleship opportunities for students at RU and NRCC. Perhaps the fire that burns on your head shines out God's selflessness and attracts others who see that beauty.

There's fires of evangelism, of education, of art, of worship, service, wellness, and hospitality, and myriads of other gifts. These fires burn in each of us, and no matter how different, each of them are the fire of Jesus that we're called to share. The fire of Pentecost is the light by which we tell the story of Jesus.

Today, as the Easter season has now ended, we extinguish the Christ Candle, for Christ's ascension into

heaven is marked by the descent of the Holy Spirit. The fire of God's love is still with us; it's just now passed from Jesus, to the Holy Spirit, then to us through baptism. Yes! There's fire in our baptism! Well, check this out. Even as we extinguish the Christ Candle, the fire passes to the font, the tongues of fire that are God's gifts of spreading God's love, tools and skills to translate God's goodness to all people. The font burns with fire of the Holy Spirit and, even when we put water in, still burns. Eventually, though the fire goes out (BLOW OUT THE FIRE) we know that God's present. God's active. The tongue of fire given on Pentecost still burns within our baptisms today and forever. That fire is in each of you.

What God-given fire burns in you? What gifts of light did you receive in your creation, in your baptism, that you're called to share? It'll only spread if you use it to spread God's kingdom, to translate God's love to others who need to know it. Share that fire, given to you in baptism, with

everyone, friends. That's what living and sharing the love of
God is all about. Amen.