

GATHERING

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship

Gathering Song: Teach Me Once Again

Oh, Lord, I am broken, oh.

Oh, Lord I am broken, oh.

Take me down to the river, Jordan every Sunday mornin',
Won't you teach me once again what it means to be whole.

Oh, Lord, I am thirsty, oh.

Oh, Lord, I am thirsty, oh.

Let me drink from the fountain, fill me up with life abundant,
Won't you teach me once again what it means to be whole.

Oh, Lord, I am weary, oh.

Oh, Lord, I am weary, oh.

Give me strength for tomorrow, grant me hope in times of sorrow,
Won't you teach me once again what it means to be whole.

Oh, Lord, I am wholly Yours.

Oh, Lord, I am wholly Yours.

You're the healer, creator, making all things new sustainer,
Won't you teach me once again what it means to be whole.

Katie Clum**

PRAISING

Prayer of Adoration

Song of Adoration: In Christ Alone

In Christ alone, my hope is found

He is my light, my strength, my song

This Cornerstone, this solid ground

Firm through the fiercest drought and storm

What heights of love, what depths of peace

When fears are stilled, when strivings cease

My Comforter, my All in All

Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh

Fullness of God in helpless babe

This gift of love and righteousness

Scorned by the ones He came to save

'Til on that cross as Jesus died

The love of God was magnified

For every sin on Him was laid

Here in the death of Christ I live, I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend**

BELONGING

Kids on the Steps

Call to Confession: To Thee I Come

To thee I come a sinner poor
And wait for mercy at thy door
Indeed I've nowhere else to flee
Oh God be merciful to me

To thee I come a sinner weak
And scarce know how to pray or speak
From fear and weakness set me free
Oh God be merciful to me

To thee I come a sinner vile
Upon me Lord vouch-safe to smile
Mercy through blood, I make my plea
Oh God be merciful to me

To thee I come a sinner great
And well thou knowest all my state
Yet full forgiveness is with thee
Oh God be merciful to me

To thee I come, a sinner lost
Nor have I aught where-in to trust
But where thou art, Lord I would be
Oh God be merciful to me

To glory bring me Lord at last
And there when all my sins are passed
With all the saints, I'll then agree

Oh God was merciful to me
Oh God was merciful to me.

Samuel Medley, Clint Wells**

Prayer of Confession & Assurance of Forgiveness

STEWARDING

Invitation to Offering

Offering Song: Spirit of the Living God

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me; Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Daniel Iverson***

FORMING

Sermon: Acts 2:1-41

Acts of the Spirit: The Church Becoming Like Jesus Spirit-Empowered Witness

Translating Grace

-I spent the summer between my second and third years of pastoral training working with a mission of the Mexican Presbyterian Church down in Mexico City.

It was called Misión Bethél. It was a street mission/church located in an impoverished area. And it worked a majority of the time with children and youth. Programs varied from a Vacation Bible School, to tutoring in English and math, to teaching computer skills, to playing games and assisting with homework. A big draw was the meals (with jalapeños and coffee for even four year olds) that brought neighborhood families together in noisy caffeinated glee. We'd also go about weekly to find a group of homeless kids who'd become addicted to sniffing glue. They often slept in a dry fountain. And we'd get them together to play soccer and serve them something to eat out of the back of a car.

One of the big events of the summer was to be a camp for middle schoolers up in the mountains. The Mexican kids were especially excited because a high school church group from Virginia was coming to join us for that week.

Now I had had Spanish classes in various school settings in years prior. But one of my *goals* was to learn enough Spanish to speak to the kids at camp near the end of the summer. The Mexican leadership team of the church (including pastor Jacinto and his wife and co-leader, Sandy, who made me part of their family and painstakingly trained me in ministry) – they asked me to teach a series on Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son. El Hijo Prodigio. The desire was to communicate God's unconditional love to a group of students who could and would be easily neglected and scapegoated.

So late in the summer the high school students from Virginia arrived. The Mexican kids were so excited. We traveled up into the mountains by bus. And so the moment came. Me. Standing in front of thirty middle school kids with a Spanish Bible in my hand. I prayed. And then I somehow launched into the story of a father who, having watched day and night for the return of his wayward son, finally saw him still a long way off, and ran to greet him with a depth of mercy that could only be described as recklessly, extravagantly, sacrificially shocking. The love of Jesus conveyed.

It was like I was speaking and watching myself speak all at once. I was thinking in Spanish, reaching for phrases to communicate the Scripture in Spanish. Responding to the kids' remarks in Spanish. And the students were actually leaning forward. They were *with* me. They were shaking their heads and laughing at the right times. The Spirit of God was doing this miracle, using my mouth to speak God-inspired words of hope that I myself was stunned to be speaking and understanding.

Then came a section of my talk where I made several references to the church group from Virginia. And strangely the kids dissolved into hoots of laughter. Perhaps you've had this experience trying to speak a language that is not your native tongue. I was not trying to be funny. But some of the kids were actually rolling on the ground.

They cried out: 'Daniél! Daniél! Que quieres decir, Daniél?' What are you trying to say?

Well. The word I was looking for was *paisanos*. It means countrymen/women. People from my country. 'Mis *paisanos*' would mean 'my friends from the U.S.' – you know, these folks from Virginia. But the word I *came up with* was '*payasos*.' *Payasos* means *clowns*.

And they loved it. Even this misspeak spoke to them. Got used by God. Their delight in the humor of it all became part of the larger work of the Spirit to communicate the astonishing love of Christ to these kids - *in* their mother tongue. You see, not just the mother tongue of Spanish, but the mother tongue of *middle school*. And it was just *like* God to use a bunch of us clowns to be part of it./

-The story we open today is about the gift of God's Spirit poured out upon Jesus' apprentices. You remember that the thesis of the Book of Acts comes from Jesus' commissioning: 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

And this story is about how the Holy Spirit communicates the good news of Jesus through his apprentices in 'heart language' that can be received and understood despite our mistakes. How the Holy Spirit uses even the likes of us to bear witness, to communicate, to translate the life-changing message of Christ and his love.

Listen to this story of our heritage from Acts 2:1-17a, 21-24, 32-33, 36-41. What do you imagine? See, smell, taste, touch, hear?

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

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

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem... listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose... ¹⁶No, 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.... ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

²²"You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— ²³this man...you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. ²⁴But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power....³⁶Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" ³⁸Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." ... ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God. Let's pray: Lord, we ask that by the power of your Spirit within us, you might expand your kingdom, translating the good news of Jesus to your children everywhere in heart language they can hear. Amen.*

-OK. On Pentecost the followers of Christ are together in a house waiting for what Jesus promised. (Pentecost was and is a Jewish celebration 50 days after Passover. And in our Jewish friends offer thanksgiving to God for the harvest and rejoice over God's giving of the law to his people.)

So in the midst of this celebration of God's rich provision comes a sound like rushing wind and the appearance of tongues as of fire. The description evokes something indescribable. It's awesome and mysterious. Jesus' apprentices are filled with the Holy Spirit. They're filled with the invisible, personal, presence of God bringing to fulfillment all that Christ began. And so by God's power the disciples begin to speak in languages not their own.

Now, did you notice? Christ's followers are not merely speaking to one *another* in a strange assortment of languages. No. They're speaking to a crowd of folks who've come to investigate the noise. That crowd is made up of Jews now living in Jerusalem who have come there from all over the many-language world of the Mediterranean. And because the apprentices have each been given a different tongue, they are able to proclaim the grace of Christ in each immigrant's *native language*! The miracle is translation. The sign of God's promised presence with his people is the empowerment of the mission to which Jesus pointed his followers – that we would be his witnesses, that we would communicate Christ so that everyone to the ends of the earth might experience his transforming grace.

-Just after I arrived at FPC years ago, there was a group of us meeting together in what we call the Chancel Room over here behind the Sanctuary. That night we broke up into teams for an exercise. The assignment was to communicate the good news of Jesus to the other groups. But the wrinkle was that your team could only use up to five English words that would be recognized by the people you were hoping to communicate with.

How would you go about that assignment, using only five words? How would you engage people who barely speak your language with good news? [Talk amongst yourselves. One minute. How communicate the good news of Jesus?]

Karl Barth was one of the great Christian thinkers of the 20th century. He said that apprentices of Jesus are persons who hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Maybe today he'd say Scripture and the Smartphone. But the idea is the hope of humanity in one hand. And the lived experience of humanity in the other. He said Christians are meant to be translators of the good news. Translating our hope of God's reckless grace into language that can be heard at the level of human experience. Serving as a *bridge* of connection between the experience of being lost and the good news of being found.

Apprentices – doing as Jesus did – are meant to engage others where they are. If you were to fall in love with someone from Italy, you'd ache to speak Italian in order to translate your affections. Because the persons God loves are deaf, some of us will have to learn *sign language*. Because the persons God loves are in prison, some of us will have to learn *prison language*. Because the persons God loves are adolescent, some of us will have to learn the language of anxious adolescence.

Don Harbaugh was on one of the teams given the task of communicating the gospel using no more than five English words. And Don happened to have a box of chocolate with him that night. What his team decided to do was to kneel at the feet of others, offering them the chocolate. They chose their five words carefully: 'We serve you for Christ.'

Consider all that's being translated there. In a world that's not yet as it should be, in a culture that's drowning in the narcissism of celebrity, swagger, and unrestraint, here is: Humility. Sympathy. Self-giving. And faithfulness to the gracious vision of Someone called Christ. 'We serve you for Christ.' It begs the question: Who is this Christ that inspires such cheerful sacrifice?

The communication of Jesus is so much larger than language, of course. Apprentices of Christ will wish to *embody* the good news, to fall on their knees – to develop a character and a way of life – that conveys the heart of Jesus – so that He might be trusted as Rabbi.

The world is not yet as it should be. Jay Leno gave a recent interview to Maria Shriver where he talked about how his wife of 45 years now suffers from advanced dementia. And everywhere he goes, people are asking him if he'll dump her and get a girlfriend

now. Leno says, 'I've said this a bunch of times, you take a vow when you get married and people are stunned ... they're so shocked that you would live up to it.' The world is not as it should be, and how we live matters.

Many of us have rightly treasured the words of St. Francis of Assisi, who said 'Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.' We appreciate the imperative to *demonstrate* lives of faith and integrity.

I would just add that without the courage to offer *words*, without a willingness to share *Why* we wish to live humble, gracious lives of sacrificial service, the larger message of *hope in Christ* can be lost. If we are to preach the gospel at all times, it is *necessary* to use *words*.

That Peter stands up to speak before a crowd at all is remarkable. He's hardly lived up to the gracious nickname Christ gave him. He's not been a Rock of faith. He's denied even knowing Jesus at the time Jesus most needed a friend. He's failed. In truth, he's been a first-class *payaso*. But, ironically, Peter's intimacy with failure, and so his intimacy the *mercy* of Christ, is what makes this message burn within his heart.

The crowd both wonders and sneers in ignorance at the rush of wind and flame. So Peter translates. He shares what he knows to be good news: 'the One you've murdered has been raised from the dead. It's Jesus who's poured out his Spirit.' If you think about it, it's a terrifying message: 'The one you put to death is alive and looking for you.' Kind of horror film: 'He's baa...ack!' Unless. Unless this Jesus has been *raised* from the dead to seek those who are lost with the kind of over-the-top mercy of the prodigal's father. Unless the pouring out of his Spirit signals God's determination to embrace even those who deny him, fail him, mock him, and crucify him.

This is Peter's personal experience that he wants to share. So Peter the-not-always-so-much Rock uses *words*. Words that push past the offense to speak both to the people's brokenness and to their longing for a God this good. By the power of the Spirit, he translates good news. The promise of mercy for them and for their children, the chance to make a fresh beginning, a 180-degree turn and apprentice themselves to the living Lord. The joy to discover their true belonging, purpose and hope.

Sisters and brothers, the times we live in are confusing, destabilizing, demoralizing. I can't imagine that believers – be they more red or more blue – would wish for Presbyterian Renee Nicole Good to be shot by a federal immigration agent or for that agent to feel he had to shoot her. The world is not yet as it should be. No more than the world was as it should be when on the flight back from my summer of warm Mexican hospitality, a flight attendant for American was having difficulty communicating with a Spanish-speaking passenger and the white woman across the aisle looked over at me as if we were together to say 'Dear God, Why can't these people just learn to speak English?' No more than the world was as it should be when the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., found it necessary to use words to point to a world that will one day be better.

Apprentices of Jesus, the Holy Spirit has empowered you and me to bear witness to that hope, to be translators of good news, to speak a language that says 'Jesus.'

Are you preaching the gospel at all times? Are you using words?

-This week at Senior Luncheon we got to hear from John MacDonald. Age 97. And here was John's message, if I may offer it in outline: You. Are. Here. Why?

You. You are special. Created by God by the billionth of a chance. Created on purpose as a masterpiece. In all your particularity.

You are. You *are* for a purpose. You *are* to bear witness to Life and Light and Love.

You are *here*. Here upon the earth. Here in this particular place with that purpose. Here in these particular circumstances with that purpose. Here in this particular sphere of influence. Here among these people God has given to you and to whom you have been given.

You are here, why? You. Are. Here. For a Love that makes men weep.

In John's case, for persons unknowing in their need to go away for a Christian Cursillo retreat like did to discover his true identity and mission in the love of Jesus. In John's case, for persons in Russia, who, he learned are just as broken and just as much in need of good news as persons here. In John's case, for persons in prison who might be able to hear him because he himself was once locked up starving in a Japanese internment camp in the Philippines.

Friends, You. Are. Here. For your Why.

You are a translators of good news. You are empowered by Christ's Spirit.

Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words. And know that words are necessary.

John's message speaks to a world not yet as it should be. It speaks to those of us who don't quite yet know the language. Who aren't quite yet become rocks.

Most emphatically, John MacDonald wanted to say this: 'Don't quit.'

Song of Response: Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God

Holy Spirit, living Breath of God, breathe new life into my willing soul.

Let the presence of the risen Lord come renew my heart and make me whole.

Cause Your Word to come alive in me; give me faith for what I cannot see.

Give me passion for Your purity; Holy Spirit Breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within, may your joy be seen in all I do.

Love enough to cover ev'ry sin, in each thought and deed and attitude.

Kindness to the greatest and the least, gentleness that sows the path of peace.

Turn my strivings into works of grace; Breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth, giving life to all that God has made.

Show Your power once again on earth, cause Your church to hunger for Your ways.

Let the fragrance of our prayers arise; lead us on the road of sacrifice.

That in unity the face of Christ may be clear for all the world to see.

Stuart Townend and Keith Getty**

Prayers of the People

One: Now, let us pray the Lord's prayer together

ALL: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever.

AMEN

SENDING

Sending Song: Kingdom of Jesus

To what shall we compare the kingdom of Jesus if not a seed

It's small it's sown it's tended and grown, and it's sturdy in you and me

Its branches never break, and its fruit never withers

His kingdom is not of this world nor of any

kingdom whose ruler's face is on a penny

He comes to make all things bright, put a new wine in us

He's chosen the small things to outlast the great

The meek and the merciful to shine through the hate

Though it seems some days that hell and its gates are prevailing

O say can you see the kingdom within us
Is the kingdom of Jesus

To what shall we compare the spirit of the hour if not a sword
It frees us unites us enslaves and divides us in violence, help us Lord. *Refrain*

O say can't you see we have one allegiance
It's to the kingdom of Jesus

Bridge: He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world
He who is in us is greater and He's overcome the world

Oh His kingdom is not one of slander or rage
But one that is ruled by the Lamb who was slain
And He's worthy of wisdom and honor and glory and strength

No pain no division no public disgrace
Will compare with seeing the smile on His face
As He welcomes us home as children with places at the table

Neither death nor threat nor pow'r can ever separate us
From the love of God forever in Christ Jesus
Ev'rything shall pass away but not the word that's within us
No it's the kingdom of Jesus

Isaac Wardell | Jon Guerra**

Benediction

Leading in Worship This Morning:

Liturgist: Colin McKearnan
Kids on the Steps: Melinda Hickey
Sermon: Dan Cravy
Musicians: Chris Caldwell, Marley Ball, Austin Graef, Michael Gray, Steve
Lympus, Noah Hill, Joselyn Thomsen
Sound and Video Techs: Zane Reneau, Ron Righter, Dan McCaffrey

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