



“INFLATION!”
SERMON FOR PENTECOST
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ST. ANDREW’S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
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Acts 2:1-21

George has already said it. It is Pentecost, the birthday of the church 1,976 years old or young. We look good for our age, don't we? Look around. We look real good for our age. The church started out with the gift that Christ gave them, a gift that Christ promised while he was still with them on earth. And in that gift, Christ promised the ever present loving guidance of God in the Holy Spirit.

I'm going to beg for your forgiveness in advance. This sermon this morning is not necessarily intended for all you 'all, but is really targeted for those four young people who joined our church this morning and for our fifth person who came to be upon us, also. For those five, so if you would, bear with me and eavesdrop in as I converse with them about this most precious gift that they have received this day. Not only have you all joined the church, the church that's nigh on to 2000 years old, you have become a part of a community of believers that transcends time. It even transcends age and race. It transcends gender. It transcends education. It transcends language, geography. It even transcends earth, because you have become a part of a community of believers, a community of believers that has marched down across the ages in beat with God's faith.

That's a special thing. You talk about joining a good club. This is the oldest club in the world. I would say it is the best, but not only that, you have been given a gift as a part of that. The entrance requirements are that which you just did. You've professed a faith in God, a faith that God is with you always, that God, the same God who breathed into Adam and Eve has breathed into you. The same God who sent Jesus as the Christ to come unto us and in the middle of his baptism, comes out of the water and sees the same spirit descending upon him as God's sign of favor. That's the same spirit you received when you were baptized. The irony of all this is that while you have joined a wonderful group of people that transcends all those things that we talked about earlier, you've also come into something that you may or may not have known about, maybe something that you weren't sure you were ready to bargain about, but it is something that everyone of us have dealt with and every member of the church since the birthday of the church.

I want you to go back with me in scripture for just a minute. You remember that verse where it said that all those folks who were listening to all these people talking in all those different languages and couldn't figure out how those stupid Galileans could learn all those many languages, how they said "what does this mean?" And others sneered. The irony of this is that we have all become a part of a faith that draws a multitude of reactions. Some folks love us because of who we are. Some folks look at what we've done and what we are about and they think "What does this mean? Where do these people come from? Where did they receive such power? How can they do that thing that they are doing, the transcending of language, sharing the gospel?"

Some of those languages aren't necessarily languages they teach in school, at least not in formal education. A lot of times they are languages that you hear in school. We are talking about kids' languages, the language of different generations and different cultures, but the interesting thing about it is each and everyone of those people back in that room that were filled with the Holy Spirit, that had a tongue fall upon them, a flame, each and everyone of them were given the gift to transcend culture, too. To share this gospel with people of different backgrounds and different understandings and that's what you've become a part of this day.

And truth be known, that's a pretty awesome thing, but I don't want you to be misled and think that it's all going to be easy. There's going to be a lot of folks that will be interested in knowing what you're talking about now that you've taken this step in faith. They're going to want to know more, they are going to be curious, they're going to want to ask you questions. What does this mean? And then there's going to be some others. They're not going to be curious. They're going to be mean. They're going to be hateful, jealous. They're going to be downright ugly about it and they are going to accuse you of things. It was back about forty years ago, thirty years ago they came up with that saying, talking about people who were religious, you 'all remember that, it was folks who were religious were called "Jesus freaks." You remember that. Some folks thought that was a pretty good term, they liked that idea of being freaks for Jesus or anything else for Jesus as long as they were for Jesus. Others, well they didn't like that term. But you know what, that term is nothing new.

About 240 years ago, there was a group of people who used to call John Wesley and his cohorts, "That group of Methodists. Everything they do is methodical. They can't do anything original." And Wesley said, "you're right, by gosh you're right, I like that term." There will be folks who will sneer. Why? Because you've been given the greatest gift all, the gift of life in the community of believers, the gift of hope in a salvation from a Savior, the gift of a Holy Spirit who will bless and who will inspire. Some are going to sneer and they are going to accuse you of things. Just remember the stuff that you learned from Jesus when he was teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are you when folks will say all kinds of things against you in my name. Know that your place in the kingdom is secure. Why? Because we have been given that gift and that gift comes in the form of the Holy Spirit, which gives us assurance and hope and faith and trust.

You have joined a great club. It's more than a club. It's a way of life. It's a way that transforms us into all that God has hoped and created us to be. In the power of the Holy Spirit, may you live boldly in faith even when folks stand around and scratch their heads, how can this be? And others go "bah." There will be enough who will want to know more. Those are the ones that God has placed for you to talk to and to get to know and to share the gospel. I guess the greatest gift in all of this, the gift of the Holy Spirit is that it enables us to do things that we never thought we could do and I'm not just talking about speaking in languages, I'm talking about speaking in cultures, speaking in generations, speaking in actions and words, because we have a gospel and that gospel is the gospel of hope for the whole world and now you all are a part of that and the church is rejoicing.

You can't really see it, but I'm wearing my Pentecost tie. It has Snoopy on it. Robert Short wrote a book many years ago called *The Gospel According to Peanuts*.¹ In it he sort of alludes to Snoopy being the Holy Spirit that kind of dances in unexpected and unannounced and unpredicted and plants a big fat sloppy kiss right on the mouth of those who don't know it's coming. And then dances right on out because that's the working of the Holy Spirit. Every time that we think we've got the spirit down pat, here it comes, dancing in, in ways that we don't expect.

In the power of the Holy Spirit, you all have been given new life and new hope to share a gospel so that others would have that new life and that new hope. That's what Pentecost is. An awful lot of people find themselves inflated and usually what they're inflated with is themselves, but you're different. Each and every one of you are different. We're different because we have been inflated with the Holy Spirit. We've been given the breath of God and charged with the task of sharing that breath with others.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, I pray that you will be the spirit led, spirit filled church, not just here, but everywhere you go. Amen!

¹ Robert L. Short, *The Gospel According to Peanuts*. Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1965. **Note:** This is not the author's position regarding Snoopy within the realm of the Peanuts strip. Rather, this is my interpretation of Snoopy taken in a different direction after Mr. Short's presentation. -BDH