

5-23-21 Pentecost

Sermon- Speak To Me That I May Speak

Scripture- Acts 2:1-21, CTW PS 104: 24-34

Hymns- Lord Speak To Me, That I May Speak, Frances Havergal, 544, 298

Theme- Pentecost was the birth of the Church, the dawn of a new day and thousands came to know Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord through one experience that everyone could understand. Do you understand the implications for your Christian life?

I. Introduction: The Need for a Translator

I recently read about an embarrassing incident that took place during Jimmy Carter's presidency. President Carter made a state visit to Poland which attracted a lot of attention because the Cold War was still going on at the time.

The eyes of the world were on the American President, and his efforts at international reconciliation.

President Carter started his major speech in Warsaw by saying in Polish: "I have a lustful desire in my heart for the Polish people." What he meant to say was, "I have a great love for the Polish people."

The problem was he was relying on a translator who didn't know Polish very well and whose real specialty was 19th Century Russian!

A. We all know about language barriers. They can cause a lot of problems and conflicts.

If only we could learn to understand one another, and thus, be more understanding.

As we see in our Scripture Passage, on the Day of Pentecost, they didn't need translators. Everybody understood in their own language. It must have been amazing to have years of language barriers just disappear!

It was all done for them by the power of the Holy Spirit, who as we know, can empower us to do anything!

B. This was the birth of the Church, the dawn of a new day and thousands came to know Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord through one experience that everyone could understand.

That makes me wonder: “How can we convey the Good News of Jesus Christ today, in a way that all people will be able to hear it and understand?”

We live in an area where there are churches of all types and sizes. And with modern technology, most anyone can hear a Christian Preacher on television, radio, Facebook Live, YouTube—you name it—any time of the day.

And everyone, at least in America, has access to a Bible. You have helped to make this possible by supporting the ministry of the Gideons whose aim is to put a Bible in every hand in the world.

And if you want commentary on what it means—“**Google**” it! We can read about it or hear it in any language we choose.

C. But still, so many do not understand it or simply don’t believe in it.

With all these amazing means of communicating with one another, we still have so many language barriers.

And we are living in a time, when, arguably more persons than ever in the history of the world, do not understand why the Church of Jesus Christ exists, or do not think it is relevant to their lives. What is wrong with this picture?

II. Why are we having such a hard time conveying the message of Christ?

Could it be that we are speaking in a language that persons do not understand? If so, how do we change this? The answer comes at Pentecost.

A. There is a language that nearly everyone can understand and it is the language that everyone needs to hear and wants to hear.

I'm talking about the language of God, which is the language of **Love**. Jesus calls us to love our neighbor. And our love for God inescapably motivates us to love others.

But, of course, it's hard to love everyone...as one person wrote a long time ago: **"To love the whole world for me is no chore. My only real problem is my neighbor next door."**

I remember, as a teenager living with my Aunt and Uncle for a summer. They had a next door neighbor who would not—for some reason—give us the time of day. That didn't stop my Aunt and Uncle from cheerfully saying "Hi" every time that neighbor was in his yard.

One day I asked them, "Why do you bother to say 'hi' to that guy? He never even looks your way. He never says, 'Hi' back."

Their answer...very matter of fact...with no explanations nor complaints, but with a hint of surprise at my asking was: "Because that's what we are supposed to do."

That stuck with me. That spoke to me. I did not understand it, but there was the element of "Love one another as I have loved you" that I had heard about but really never understood.

B. We are to find ways to "lead with love in all we do and it will help us to to know more about that language of love.

Rick Warren once wrote: "For some time now, the hands and feet of the Body of Christ have been amputated, and we've been pretty much reduced to a big mouth. We talk far more than we walk! It's time to reattach the limbs and let the church be the church in the 21st Century."

III. Maybe that's why so many people can't understand us!

A. A journalist once said of a Christian Missionary: "If I had been with him any longer, I would have been compelled to be a Christian—and he never spoke to me about it at all."

Charlie Brown, the leading character in the "Peanuts" comic strip series wants so very much to be loved and treated with respect.

In one episode, Charlie Brown is lying down with his head resting on a stone as Lucy stands beside him. Charlie looks up at Lucy and asks: "If I tell you something, will you promise not to laugh?"

Lucy replies, "I promise."

Charley Brown said "This is very personal and I don't want you to laugh."

Lucy responds, "I promise."

Charlie then shares something very special with her: "Sometimes I lie awake at night listening for a voice that will cry: 'We love you Charlie Brown.'"

Lucy bursts forth with a boisterous, "HA, HA, HA, HA, HA" and Charlie Brown is bowled over from his reclining position.

I would imagine that just about every person in the world can relate, in one way or another, to what Charlie Brown was feeling.

In many ways, the entire world is lying awake at night listening for a voice that will cry out: "I love you." And we are to be THAT voice.

B. But, we can tell others that we love them—that God loves them until we are blue in the face, but they will not understand our speech until it is put into action...

It won't work until it is tangible...until it awakens in them a craving for what they need most!

A century ago, evangelists dreamed of "winning" the world for Christ in a generation. Billy Graham packed stadiums worldwide and satellites have beamed the Christian message almost everywhere on earth.

And although, it has made a difference, the world still has not been "won." Far from it.

C. Perhaps our calling, as Holy Spirit filled Christians is not so much to "win" the world in the classic sense of the word.

Instead of trying to **talk people into thinking as we do**, perhaps, our privilege is simply to love people with the love of Christ.

Last week we read in John Chapter 14, where Jesus is preparing His disciples for when He will Ascend back to the Father.

He says, "anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

And then in Chapter 15 Jesus says, "My command is this: 'Love each other as I have loved you.'" And a few verses later he says again, "This is my command: Love each other."

IV. The biblical stories of Jesus overflow with Jesus performing acts of love and kindness. And these acts read like a language in and of themselves.

A. For instance, Jesus touched the untouchables. Jesus spent time with the rejected. Jesus showed compassion to the suffering.

And in these stories we see the power of Jesus' language of love on people's lives.

Jesus, through His example, has shown us that if we step outside our lives and create acts of love on the unsuspecting, the underserving or the hurting we can change the world.

Think about it for minute, can you remember a time when someone or a group of people was especially kind to you?

What happened when someone was kind to you? Who was involved? How did their act of love and kindness towards you change you?

Can you remember a time when you reached out in love and kindness to another? What moved you to do this? Who was involved?

How did your actions affect you and the others involved?

B. Remember that from the earliest days of the Christian movement, Christians stood out as counter-cultural, and it wasn't because of some moral superiority.

One historian of ancient times said of those earliest Christians "Oh, see how they love one another, they turn the world upside down..."

This is what we are called to do—this is the language we are called to speak to a lost, broken and love starved world.

And we live in a world where so many have never even heard this language...perhaps they have heard “of” it...but they have never really “heard” it.

And we can’t speak the language on our own, with our own strength.

That’s how it was with the Apostles and that is how it is with us.

It wasn’t until the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost and touched them and lived inside of them that they were able to speak, act and articulate the language of Love in such a way that the Church was born and 3,000 people joined the first day!!!

It’s interesting that when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers, they left the house in which they were staying and went outside.

C. Is there a separation between the church and the neighborhood?

Do the folks who live around you and I, know we are Christians—not by what we say but by how we love? Do they know Trinity EC Church is for real by how we love?

Speaking the language of Love means caring for others unconditionally. It means showing compassion through generous action.

It means letting the folks, like the Charlie Brown’s of the world know—beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we love them—and that this love comes from God.

I really do think that the Christian Church has a great opportunity, if we only start walking in the Spirit and speaking the language of God rather than the language of the world.

When we love-- unconditionally, exhibit mercy rather than judgment, humility rather than superiority, compassion rather than the strict letter of the Law we are speaking the language of God.

And folks will want what God has given us. People will want to be a part of something like that. And there will be a bright future ahead. And we will be doing what Christ has called us to do.

And Pentecost won't be just a memory, an event we celebrate once a year—it will be a daily occurrence.

“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

May it be so. Lord, may it be so. Amen. Let us Pray...