

“Mass Confusion?”—Acts 2:2-6

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Mass Confusion?”, is Acts 2:2-6 → *Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. This is the text.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

Have you ever purchased something, opened the package, took out the instructions (assuming you're the type of person who reads instructions) and searched through the twenty or so different languages to find the instructions in English? While it is a commentary on the multi-cultural environment in which live today it also reflects the difficulty of

dealing with the language barrier. It is a very frustrating experience to encounter someone who does not understand your language, whether in a foreign country or on your home soil. Even the study of their language from an academic perspective may not help much if you don't have a command of their language conversationally.

On the day when Jesus sent the promised Holy Spirit to His disciples, there was a lot of confusion in the midst of many dynamics taking place. Luke 24:53 tells us that following Jesus' ascension into heaven they *were continually hanging out in the temple blessing God*. On this particular Sabbath the temple would have been filled with Jewish pilgrims from distant nations who had come to offer sacrifice and celebrate the festival of Pentecost. While meeting together, possibly in one of the many meeting rooms of the temple courts, a number of mysterious things happened which could have been rather confusing:

- ① Verse 2 of our text tells us that *suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind* which hit their ears *and it filled the entire house where they were sitting*. Might it have been confusing to hear a sound like a mighty rushing wind and not feel any wind? Verse 6 says at **this sound** *the multitude came together, and they were bewildered*. It only mentions the sound, not feeling any wind.
- ② Verse 3 mentions something which *appeared to them like a fire* which *divided* into small flames (i.e. tongues) *and . . . rested on each*

one of them without burning them?

- ③ Verse 4 says *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. All of a sudden speaking fluently in a language with which you are unfamiliar? Verses 5-6 says each one . . . from every nation under heaven . . . was hearing them speak in his own language. Can you imagine hearing yourself speak a language with which you are unfamiliar and others knowing exactly what you're saying? Even more strange would be knowing exactly what you're saying in your mind but hearing nothing intelligible **to you** coming from your mouth.*

As with all of God's miraculous acts our brains cannot logically comprehend the actions, especially when they convey His grace, the gift of His undeserved love and favor. It must have been confusing both for the bystanders who did not know about Jesus and the believers. However, as promised (cf. Matthew 10:19-20; Luke 12:11-12; John 14:26; 15:26) the Holy Spirit also gave them an understanding of what was taking place according to God's written Word in the Old Testament (cf. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21), along with the ability to express the message. These signs, connected with the filling of the Holy Spirit, made everyone stop in their tracks and take notice **of God's presence** (cf. Exodus 3:1-4).

Actually, this turned out to be the clearest moment of their lives even with the mixed dynamics of confusion, amazement, astonishment and

bewilderment. One might be tempted to label some of them as good Lutherans with their response of *What does this mean?* (cf. Acts 2:12). It certainly brought many people to an eternally important “teachable moment” in their lives as they strove to comprehend it all. It gave Peter and the other disciples the privilege to speak clearly God’s Law to their sinful heart, so much so that *they were cut to the heart* with the Holy Spirit’s conviction of their sins (cf. John 16:7-8), leading them to ask *Brothers, what shall we do?* (cf. Acts 2:37) As a result three thousand of them repented of their sins, believed in the atoning work of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and were baptized (cf. Acts 2:41), having heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mass confusion? You live in a sin-broken world where people are constantly striving to find answers for the spiritual struggles in their lives. You know there is a right and wrong but struggle to live it. It shows *that the work of the law is written on your heart, while your conscience also bears witness, and your conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse your behavior* (cf. Romans 2:15). You know that there’s more to this life than just this earthly life. Naturally. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says: *God has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.* You desire and search to be loved, cared for, accepted and forgiven unconditionally and yet constantly feel unloved, abandoned, rejected and unforgiven . . . even by your own self! You can

search all the religious teachings around you but still your brokenness in sin is so great that you can do no other than declare with the apostle Paul in Romans 7:24 → *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

Only the Holy Spirit can break through your sin-darkened mass confusion and give you the power to understand yourself in relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 says: *“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him”—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For **the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.** No one—not even you—knows you as well as the Holy Spirit does! It goes on to say in verse 12 of the same chapter: *We have received . . . the Spirit Who is from God, **that we might understand the things freely given us by God.*** Grace.*

When all your defenses are broke down by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, you throw yourself at the mercy of God your heavenly Father, clinging by faith to the Person & Work of Jesus Christ for you. The Holy Spirit reveals to the unconditional love of Jesus **for you**. He reminds you that you are eternally cared for by your Father in heaven, Who accepts a sinner such as yourself in the atoning work of Jesus, making you a saint (i.e. a holy one). The Holy Spirit reassures you of unconditional forgiveness of sins which Jesus made possible **for you**. He empowers

you to confess with your mouth: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints (that’s us), the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” (3rd Article of the Apostles’ Creed)

Because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and in your baptism (cf. John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5), you don’t have to be confused about your relationship with the Lord. He empowers that relationship by giving you faith in Christ and gifts you as you serve Jesus as Lord of your life. The mass confusion within your heart and life may not be a language barrier of ethnic proportions. Rather, it is a relationship barrier of the heart, built to trust in God as your heavenly Father, but corrupted by sin. This mass confusion is cleared up by the Holy Spirit bringing you to faith in Jesus Christ.

Along with the gifts of faith, forgiveness and forever in God’s presence, the Holy Spirit also empowers you to share your faith, serve your neighbor and continue seeking His Will through His Word and Sacraments. He constantly brings you to the clear promises of God’s written Word, especially when you are tempted by the devil, the world and your own sinful nature to discredit His gifts for you in Christ. In accord with Jesus’ clear and certain promise in John 14:16-17 you can be assured. He says: *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, Whom the world*

cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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