

## Pentecost

Psalm 104:24-35  
Acts 2:14-24

June 4, 2017

Way back in 2004, I made my first mission trip to Guatemala. It was a different part of the country from where we go today, and the conditions were a little more rustic. There were twelve of us on that team, with all eight men sharing one bedroom, which is a sermon for another day.

It's Tuesday at sunrise, we're just coming to life, when someone comes in, whacks me on the foot and asks if I'd like to be on the radio. Never having been an early riser, I mumble "what for" or something like that.

It's a discussion thing of some kind, and it starts in fifteen minutes, so I better get my act together and be grateful it's radio and not television. I'm less than a pretty picture at that hour or any hour, for that matter.

Cefarino is the gentleman who runs the radio station down there and is host of this particular program, which comes live from a little studio right in the mission. Teri Littrell, our missionary in residence whom many of you know, is sitting across from me at a table. She will translate for me into Spanish, and Cefarino, in turn, will translate into Quiche, the tribal dialect that's spoken by many people in that part of the country.

Cefarino begins the program by introducing me. While that's going on, Teri leans across the table and whispers, "What passage are you going to use?" I instantly respond with a deer in headlights look: "Teri, I don't even know what I'm supposed to do, let alone what passage to use." Whereupon she replies, "You pick a passage from the Bible and teach on it." Keep in mind, this exchange is going on while I'm being introduced. Also keep in mind, this is an hour-long program, in which, I'm just finding out, instead of a discussion, I am the main course.

I may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, but right away on this, my very first mission trip to Guatemala, I learn that missionaries are exceptionally entrepreneurial, ready to go at a moment's notice, and have no problem expecting others to be the same.

That day gave me a bit of insight into what must've been going through the Apostle Peter's mind in Jerusalem on that morning described in the second chapter of Acts.

Pentecost was one of the three great Jewish festivals of the year. It was observed on the fiftieth day after Passover, hence the name Pentecost, penta being the Greek word for “five,” so Jerusalem was packed with pilgrims. Some of the local Christ followers had gathered for worship when this happened:

***Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*** (Acts 2:2-4, TNIV)

It was wonderful for some and more than a little bizarre for the onlookers, especially those who’d come from out of town and were hearing people speak in their own native languages.

***Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”*** (vv. 12-13)

Whenever there’s confusion or lack of clear information, a sense of urgency goes just one way: up, sometimes way up. Anxiety goes viral and we grab on to just about anything.

It may be the loudest voice that gets everyone’s attention or the one that sounds most sure of itself, which of course also means that sometimes logic goes right out the window. It’s also when fringe groups step into the vacuum and do serious recruiting. It’s how supremacist groups, religious cults and goof ball personalities get their attention.

That’s why what Peter did here was so important.

***Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd.*** (v. 14)

He addressed the questions in reverse order, answering the most recent first, which meant he handled the rumors head-on.

***These people are not drunk, as you suppose.*** (v. 15)

Then he connected what was happening with Scripture, giving people something to hold on to, a framework to help them understand. He first quoted the prophet Joel, and then went on to the Psalms. He connected these Old Testament passages to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Friends, here are some take-homes for today:

### **UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE**

Know your history. Keep up to date with the news. What you watch and what you read make a huge difference. Do not fall for the lie that says our problems are there because of a certain party, person, or cause. That's way too simplistic; it's irresponsible and is unfaithful to a life of authentic discipleship. Friends, understand the culture.

Another challenge is to become a student of Scripture.

### **BE A STUDENT OF SCRIPTURE**

Understand how it speaks to life: your life, this church's life, this country and this world. The faith you and I claim to share will make precious little difference in the world or in you personally if it's not grounded in Scripture. It was Peter's first line of defense when he spoke to the crowd that day. Friends, be students of Scripture.

A third take-home has to do with relationships.

### **BE PART OF A GOD-HONORING COMMUNITY**

Verse 14 says that Peter stood, which by itself would focus the people's attention. But he wasn't alone. The passage says that the other disciples stood with him. So here was a physical witness that backed up what was being said. Peter did the talking, but by just being there the others added to the impact.

In Guatemala our group met for prayer every morning. We usually spent an hour worshipping, praying for the wonderful people, and lifting each other to God. As soon as the radio program of great surprise had ended, I went to where we met, and was greeted with a tremendous round of applause. They'd been listening. I didn't know that. They'd also been praying as they listened. They had a key role in that God thing, and I told them so.

I want that for you, friends.

There's a certain level of growth that you will not attain on your own. It's impossible.

The book of Proverbs says,

***As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*** (27:17)

It speaks of friction, which is how tools become sharp and how rough edges get smoothed out. It's how you do the same, and it's impossible to do on your own.

Here's a note of grace.

Do you remember what Peter was like before this? He was pretty much a well meaning doofus. He had a chronic case of "foot-in-mouth disease." He meant well but constantly got in trouble thanks to a rapid fire style of saying the wrong things or doing the wrong things. He was an expert in endless embarrassment.

But look at what happens here. It's a chaotic situation that required immediate response. Peter jumps right in, true to character, but something's different this time. Peter is different. He knows his stuff. He's clear. He's articulate. He offers specific suggestions as to next steps, and in the end, 3,000 people come to faith.

He understood the culture.

**UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE**

He knew his Scripture.

**BE A STUDENT OF SCRIPTURE**

He was grounded in community.

**BE PART OF A GOD-HONORING COMMUNITY**

And it was all because he had tasted of new life in Jesus Christ.

On the outside he was still quick to act and quick to speak, which means his transformation went way deeper than that. Sometimes that's the real conversion. What used to be a liability, God turned into a light.

Is there a way that could happen in you?