

Imagine with me a room about this size and filled with about 120 people. That's not hard to imagine. Now imagine that this room is filled with people who are facing some real challenges in their lives. Imagine that this room is filled with people and at least one or two of them are facing some major decision in their life and they are confused about what to do.

This person is looking at different options but nothing seems very clear. So imagine that someone is asking this type of question as they are sitting in worship today.

Imagine that this room has about 120 people in it and someone is sitting here and they are realizing that their body is starting to hurt more and more. Imagine that someone is sitting in this sanctuary and they are worried because each day seems to bring more and more physical pain. Imagine that someone is sitting here and thinking those thoughts.

Imagine that this room has about 120 people in it and someone is finishing up their time in their school and they are about to enter a new school or finish up school altogether. Imagine that someone is sitting in a building about this size with 120 people and they are wondering about what the next chapter is going to be like in their life.

Imagine that we are part of that 120 people that were gathered in a similar size building about 2000 years ago. We are told in Acts 1 that 120 people gathered inside of a building. These 120 people have gathered to celebrate Pentecost. Pentecost is a word which means 50 so these 120 people have gathered because it is 50 days after the Passover.

Pentecost is also called the Festival of Weeks and Scripture tells us how it is supposed to be celebrated. Each person was to bring a gift in proportion to what they felt they had been blessed by God. And people came from all over. And they spoke lots of different languages.

And it wasn't just the adults that were invited. Everybody that lived in the house was invited. That meant it was a time for children and youth and adults to come together and celebrate the ways that God had blessed them.

Pentecost, or the Festival of Weeks, was also to be a time to celebrate an event from their past. They gathered on Pentecost because Pentecost was the day that people gathered to remember how God gave the 10 Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai. That was a pretty big and glorious event.

The 120 gathered to remember how Moses traveled with the Hebrew people over a long way and then they come to a mountain and Moses went up the mountain where Moses was given instructions. Instructions which we commonly call the 10 commandments. So the people gather on Pentecost in the story we read in order to celebrate the ways that God has been revealed to them in the past and the ways that God was blessing them today.

But the problem for these 120 was that even though they were supposed to be celebrating they did not feel much like celebrating. These 120 were worried. They were worried because Jesus was now gone. There were stories about his reappearance but then he disappeared again. Was he gone for good?

There were 12 people who were supposed to be people that Jesus could trust but one of them had betrayed him. Judas has been replaced but no one knew what was going to happen next.

So in the story we read from Acts 2 we have this big celebration of Pentecost but you have 120 people who have sequestered themselves into a room and closed the doors because they do not want to be a part of any celebration. They have worries and they do not want to celebrate.

Have you ever been in that situation before? People are having a big party but you are in the dumps. People are excited by finishing school and going to the next school but you are unsure about what that will mean. You see posts on social media about the fun things that people are doing but you are worried about what is happening to your life?

You go to a retirement party but you are worried about what is next for you? People are celebrating around you but you don't feel much like celebrating.

The story of Pentecost that we read in Acts is really the story of 120 people who come together for a party but no one feels like partying. They just don't feel like a party or feel like celebrating. And so they go into a room together and they are wondering what to do next.

And that is when God shows up. When these people are worried about what is going to happen next God's Holy Spirit gets involved. And when God's Holy Spirit decides to show up, incredible stuff happens.

Notice that God's Spirit does not show up because the people's prayers are answered. Nothing is said in the text about them praying. The Holy Spirit did not show up because they were good people. Nothing is said about how deserving these people are.

The Holy Spirit shows up because the Holy Spirit wants to show up. God's Holy Spirit shows up to those 120 people because God chooses to send the Spirit to these confused, bewildered, and spiritually dry 120 people.

And what happens? The entire house is filled with the Holy Spirit. All of the people are filled with the Holy Spirit and they begin to speak in other languages. But even though the people in the crowd are speaking in different languages each person is able to hear what the other is saying in their own language.

In other words, they don't have to become something that they are not. God uses each one and each person's uniqueness to reveal the Spirit to them.

You may have come into worship today feeling dry for some reason spiritually. Maybe you are feeling dry because of something going on in your family. Maybe you are feeling spiritually dry because of something that has happened at church. Maybe you are feeling spiritually dry because of something that is happening at school.

But here we have a story where God intervenes in the lives of spiritually dry people just like us. People who are confused and worried. The Spirit blows in and the people speak different languages but they are each able to understand one another.

So what does that mean for us? One learning I think we can take away from this passage is that God uses the unique gifts of each of us and we don't have to become someone else. We don't have to be a poor imitation of someone else. God can use who we are.

One way to understand how they speak in different languages but understood each other is to believe that God wants to lift up what is unique about each of us and bring us together to serve. Did you hear what Peter said about that?

Peter quotes the Old Testament prophet Joel about how God will pour out God's Spirit on the children and youth and they will prophesy. Young men will see visions and old men will dream dreams. The Spirit will be poured out to the women, which was a big deal back then.

And the Spirit will even be poured out to the slaves which was a really big deal.

I entitled the sermon, "Are your dreams bigger than your memories?" In other words, are we focused on looking back to the past and being stuck there in our worries or are we focused on the future and to the ways that God's Spirit is being revealed to us in the future? Are we open to believing that God's Holy Spirit can bring fresh life and vitality to you and help you overcome whatever challenge you are facing right now?

The story of Pentecost can be a real story to us. God's Holy Spirit does appear and God's Holy Spirit does bring new life. We don't need to look back to the past to see God at work. Our challenge is to be open to allowing God to use us today and tomorrow. AMEN.

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-Text: Acts 2:1-21

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