

Our Savior Lutheran Church – Pastor Barnes
The Day of Pentecost – Veni Sancti Spiritus
May 31, 2020

Texts: Acts 2:1-21; I Corinthians 12:3-13; John 20:19-23

May God's Spirit continue to abide and angle your hearts towards loving one-another. May God's Spirit guide you into understanding, "What does This Mean?" for each day seeing God in you and others.

No, I'm not trying to somehow show off that I understand Latin for there is very little that I do, but this statement: "Veni Sancti Spiritus" is love in any language. Come Holy Spirit is the translation.

You just heard the song sung by Sandi Patty – Love in Any Language, it goes on to say: *fluently spoken here. To bring our governments and world together not apart.*

So what is the gift of the Holy Spirit about?

I took two years of German in High School, I guess, in part, I wanted to speak German with my Gross PaPa William Schmekel. I never was able to speak fluently! Words here and there, but hard pressed to string a sentence together. And, I don't know about you but when I am around people speaking another language – fluently – I feel left out on the outside wondering what are they really saying?

Most often when someone is speaking Spanish. Then I say: "gee, maybe I ought to learn the language, spoken so fluently but of course, I never do! And, I'm left on the outside listening in.

All of this brings me back to my original question so, what is the Holy Spirit, the gift given, all about?

It isn't primarily speaking in tongues for it says that all those from different countries and towns, understood on the day of Pentecost!

It isn't primarily to offer some secret that no one had ever heard before, because the very presence of Christ was/is pretty clear "for God so loved the World, that he Gave!"

Maybe it IS as simple as "Love in any language, fluently spoken here."

If so, then what is this love? Coming from the Holy Spirit, one would have to offer that it has to be Agape love, the love that is sacrificial. Love that is looking to bring people together rather than breaking them apart. Love, that gives of self without second guessing. Love that desires to build up, not for "self acclaim" but for the betterment of those in our "circles" and beyond.

Is this gift of the Holy Spirit optional? Can we back out or back away if we want to? I hear many people, government and otherwise, claiming the name of Christian, but their words and actions seem to belie anything below the surface. For most part we say forgive us in word and deed. I would say we have many more atheists than those who would officially claim to be so!

Is love being fluently spoken and by "spoken" the words are followed by actions.

The Epistle of James (often called the "straw Epistle" by Luther) says in Chapter 2: *"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace,' keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?"*

Love in any language, on the day of Pentecost, many languages, but all in their own language understood!

Understood what? Yes, there were many lessons and sermons taught and given. But if you follow the Word, it is more like the parable of the Good Samaritan or the "Waiting Father," i.e. Prodigal Son. Love in waiting. Love in Action, speaks often times much louder than words.

The Spirit intercedes for us before God. But is also our "helper." Helper in what? Think all the way back to Genesis....it says we were created in God's image, in His likeness. Well, it says quite clearly that God IS love!

Three Stanza's worth repeating from "Love in Any Language"

1. We teach the young our difference
Yet look how we're the same
We love to laugh, to dream our dreams
We know the sting of pain.
2. Oh, maybe when we realize
How much there is to share
We'll find too much in common
To pretend it isn't there.
3. Finally, though the rhetoric of government
May keep us worlds apart
There's no misinterpreting
The language of the heart.

Love in any language fluently spoken here maybe we would rather not understand or be able to fluently speak?

Someone once said: "Ignorance is bliss." I guess if you figure you can live in a vacuum or your world is just you or you figure the Spirit given is optional and certainly not as straightforward as "loving?" That is why agape love, love that gives first and asks questions, maybe, later.

Did you notice that we have 2 versions of the Gift of the Holy Spirit? The one we usually think of is 50 days after Easter, a festival of harvest that has forever been linked to God's Spirit and languages.

Personally, I like the second story, today's story from John 20:19-23. Still in shock and surprise! Still wondering, what happened? Mulling over the level of risk in the community and the intentions of the authorities, remaining huddled in the upper room. Some stay frozen in shock, while others cycle rapidly through the stages of grief as Friday becomes Saturday becomes Sunday.

Jesus appears and breathes the Spirit onto his followers as Easter Sunday becomes evening! "Receive the Holy Spirit," he says. He does not offer an invitation or allow an opportunity for avoidance. The Greek indicates a command, not "if you like" but "here, take it."

The Spirit is upon them and the power that comes with it. Forgiving and retaining of sins. We call it "the office of the keys." I call it opening the door!

If you remember, Peter asked Jesus how many times he was to forgive, to which Jesus responded 7 times 70, in other words more than we can count. In other words, love in any language. Even when you know others may not understand the gift of forgiveness. Such as Jesus upon the cross, in his dying breathes, said: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

When I was serving as a Chaplain in the Central Correctional Men's Prison, 1700 men. Our group was asked by the directing Chaplain: "in your opinion, is there anyone here that is beyond redemption?" I could hear the "office of the keys jingling symbolically at my waist, but I didn't know what to say?

Easy to say lock them up. Much more difficult to discern the Spirit gift that each of us has. Easy to say, I have the truth. Much more difficult to answer Pilate's question before Jesus: "What is truth?"

The Acts account of Pentecost may seem more palatable than John's; it proclaims rather than commissions. When we gather with the worshiping community or consider the work of the church, it is much more exciting to hear the grand story of wind and tongues of flame, and perhaps more comfortable, too. We might rather celebrate the birthday of the church than acknowledge our collective agency: The commission Christ gives in John 20 empowers us to BE the church together.

Love in any language - Veni Sancti Spiritus - Come Holy Spirit.

In honor of my Gross Pa Pa Schmekel, a little German: The German word for "gift" is *Gabe*. The German word for "Assignment" is *Aufgabe*, derived from the German word for gift. The Germans have an expression, "Every gift (*Gabe*) Entails an assignment (*Aufgabe*)."

This is the way the risen Christ does business. Whatever he wants done in the world, He chooses to do it through delegation, by commissioning ordinary, Spirit-filled people, US!

To do it for him He gives us the work that previously only God could do, giving us the Holy Spirit so that we might set people free just like he set us free.

Note that this is not the end of our story. Jesus gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that we may be equipped for his commission. He gives us an assignment. We are to be his witnesses, going forth from this place into the world to tell everybody, what we know. The trouble between us and God has been fixed by God. God has refused to remain hidden and obscure. God has reached out to us in Jesus. God has fully revealed God's purposes to us in Christ.

Veni Sancti Spiritus

Isn't it fascinating that with Acts on one end and the Gospel of John on the other. The middle is 1 Corinthians: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who ACTIVATES all of them IN EVERYONE. To EACH is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Now, if you feel you might have been left out or the Spirit might just be floating over-head read from Galatians 5:22-26 'The Fruit of the Spirit' No, I am not going to read it for you, so again: Galatians 5:22-26

This is self and Spirit discovery! As you heard me mention in the Children's message, I feel comfort and ease at the noise of trains in the distance or frogs "croaking" in a pond or shallow slew. It can't be seen, it is no longer annoying. It brings peace and comfort. The train is carrying the load needed to keep the world going. Frogs (at least in Turtle pond) support the Turtle community by bringing Cattails for Turtle beds and Food Rocks to be the surface where lake weed is kept.

Sound silly? Maybe it isn't the sound of a mighty rushing wind as on "the day of Pentecost." But there is a silence in the sound I love. Psalm 62:5: "For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him." And Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God!"

Let me close with a quote from Mother Teresa: "In the Heart of the World". In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence."

Love in ANY Language. Veni Sancti Spiritus.

Amen.