

Acts is about mission, about speaking, proclaiming, the good news to people everywhere, in languages (and language) they can understand; Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit is the driving force behind this work, e.g. in the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch, we read “the Spirit said to Philip ...” (8:29). They spoke “in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (v. 4). Divided into nations in antiquity, now all humanity is one; now God is in our midst. The Spirit is the launching pad for this mission. The list in vv. 9-11 includes Jews from the whole of the known world.

The mission to Gentiles will begin later. “God’s deeds of power” (v. 11), of which all spoke, are explained by Peter in vv. 14-36, based on a quotation from the book of Joel (vv. 17-18): as the end of the era in which we are living approaches, many people will prophesy, and many will “see” things beyond what we call concrete reality. And this will happen because God pours out the Holy Spirit. Prophecy here is probably enthusiastically sharing the faith, “speaking about God’s deeds of power” (v. 11). The “portents” (v. 19, events that foreshadow the end of the era) are expressed in terms of primitive science but we need to realize that things will happen which make no sense to our rational minds, things we cannot explain.

#### John 14:8-17,(25-27)

Judas Iscariot has left to do his dastardly deed. Jesus now prepares his disciples for his departure. Belief in God includes belief in him (v. 1). He is going, through resurrection and ascension, to the Father, to prepare a place of permanent fellowship for them (vv. 2-3). Philip shows by his question in v. 8 that he still does not understand (“know”, v. 9) Jesus, for Jesus is the revelation of God. The Son is present (“dwells”, v. 10) in the Father, and the Father in the Son; the deeds Jesus has done are the Father’s. A master entrusted his agent to act on his behalf in every way. Jesus is the Father’s agent, empowered to act completely for the Father. Jesus says, in essence, if you do not buy this mutual presence, then trust in me on the basis of what I do: you are seeing the Father’s “works” (vv. 10-11).

The faithful will continue these works. (The ones they do will be “greater”, v. 12, because Jesus has nullified sin.) By asking Jesus in prayer, as his agent (“in my name”, v. 14), God will do whatever the faithful ask. Fidelity to him is both loving and obeying (v. 15). Jesus is their first advocate, i.e. helper and counsellor. He will ask the Father to “give you another Advocate” (v. 16), “the Spirit of truth” (v. 17), i.e. the Holy Spirit. That the Spirit exists and what he does is known only to believers, not to “the world”. Philip (and others) may not understand now, but they will, for the Spirit will “teach ... [them] everything” (v. 26) and will help them recall Jesus’ message. What he teaches will be the same as what Jesus has taught. Jesus gives “peace” (v. 27, wholeness, well-being, tranquillity, concord with one another and with God), a permanent gift which will never be revoked.

© 1996-2022 Chris Haslam



# Pentecost 2022 (Year C)

## Collect

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, ignite in us your holy fire; strengthen your children with the gift of faith, revive your Church with the breath of love, and renew the face of the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

**Suggested Hymns** - For the online service you might like to view these hymns with lyrics on YouTube.

1) Come down O Love divine (294)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edK3Vv7Qwo4>

2) Let all the world in every corner sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfXldoDnvq4>

3) O Thou Who Camest From Above

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3UYybc7Xa0>

4) Angel voices ever singing (346)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nig-VqlyGzA>

## Genesis 11.1-9

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’ The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the Lord said, ‘Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.’ So, the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore, it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

## Psalms 104.25-35,37

O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

Yonder is the sea, great and wide,  
creeping things innumerable are there,  
living things both small and great.

There go the ships,  
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

These all look to you  
to give them their food in due season;  
when you give to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand,  
they are filled with good things.

When you hide your face, they are dismayed;  
when you take away their breath, they die  
and return to their dust.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;  
may the Lord rejoice in his works—

who looks on the earth and it trembles,  
who touches the mountains and they smoke.  
I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.  
May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
for I rejoice in the Lord.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
Praise the Lord!

#### **Acts 2.1-21**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord's

great and glorious day.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord  
shall be saved."

#### **John 14.8-17**

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the

Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.' If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

#### **Post Communion Prayer**

Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises of Easter by sending us your Holy Spirit and opening to every race and nation the way of life eternal: open our lips by your Spirit, that every tongue may tell of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

#### **Commentary**

##### **Genesis 11:1-9**

In the first creation story, God tells humans to "multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (1:28). They have multiplied, but are yet to spread out across the world. All the people settle in one place (disobeying God's order): in "the land of Shinar" (v. 2, Mesopotamia). V. 3 explains local building materials ("brick", "bitumen") in Hebrew terms ("stone", "mortar"). The people intend to build one city with a "tower" (v. 4), a ziggurat, a man-made mountain, in it. (Ancient peoples worshipped on mountains, as close to the gods as possible.) They decide to imitate God by ensuring that their works endure ("make a name") and refuse to obey God's order to disperse across the earth. We find vestiges of pre-Israelite theology: gods were jealous of humans (v. 6), and "us" (v. 7) refers to the royal court of the gods. Divine will clashes with human will, and God, our God, "Lord" (v. 8) wins: he punishes the people by confusing their language (v. 9). "Babel", Babylon, is here traced to the Hebrew word for confusion.

##### **Psalms 104:24-34,35b**

This psalm is a hymn of praise to God, as creator. Earlier verses have praised him for creating the heavens and the earth, for overcoming chaos, for continuing to care for the earth and all who live in it. God's marvellous "works" are everywhere, all made in his wisdom. To Israelites, "the sea" (v. 25) was almost chaotic, beyond controlling, but God is so great that even "Leviathan" (v. 26), the mythical sea monster, is his harmless, sportive creature. All living things depend on God at all times, for their "food" (v. 27) and their very "breath" (v. 29, life); without it, they die. Lack of God's presence causes terror. His creative agent is his "spirit" (v. 30). Creation is continuous, continually renewed. The "glory of the Lord" (v. 31) is the magnificence of the created world, his visible manifestation. His power is evident too in earthquakes and volcanoes (v. 32). The psalmist vows to praise God throughout his life. Praise be to God!

##### **Acts 2:1-21**

The day of Pentecost has come; it is now fifty days since Easter. The way Luke puts it shows that Pentecost is a milestone in the story of salvation: recall Luke 2:6, "the time came for her to deliver her child ..." and Luke 9:51, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up ..." These two are milestones, and the language is similar. Other translations have had been fulfilled for "came" – the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilment. Look at the manner in which the Holy Spirit comes: the sound is "like the rush of a violent wind" (v. 2); and then, "divided tongues, as of fire" (v. 3). Luke attempts to describe the event in human terms, but it is never possible to explain a divine mystery: all we can do is say what it is like. The coming of the Holy Spirit is the gift inaugurating the final stage of the salvation story (or history, chronology); this era leads up to the end of time. His arrival is in fulfilment of Christ's promise, recorded in 1:8 ("... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ...").