

“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.

The dynamics of language and confusion go hand in hand during conversation much of the time. While such a fact is blatantly obvious when you encounter a language barrier while striving to communicate with someone who does not speak your language, it also happens in the conversations of those using a common language. How many

times do people have to clarify their statements in the midst of conversations with the phrases like “well . . . that’s not what I mean” . . . or . . . “that’s not what I said” . . . or . . . “that’s not what I’m talking about”? Have you ever been frustrated because a person just wasn’t understanding what you were trying to tell him? Confusion in the midst of conversation is so prevalent that classes, books, seminars and a host of other resources are constantly available to help you develop good communication skills.

The confusion can become more intensified when you are in the midst of a crowd where numerous languages are being spoken at the same time amidst mysterious occurrences. In May of 33 AD Jews from every part of the known world assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Day of Pentecost (verse 5). It was a day in the tradition of Judaism recognizing the giving of God’s Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. While worshipping together, maybe in the temple (referred to many times in the Old Testament as “the house of the LORD”), verse 2 of our text tells us that *suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting*. Consider the confusion if the people heard a sound **like** a *mighty rushing wind* which *filled the entire house where they were sitting* but . . . felt no wind.

Then another strange occurrence: Verse 3 of our text says that

tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

Again, how were they to understand what appeared to be flames of fire burning on each of the heads of the apostles, and quite possibly all the Christians present? And . . . without harming them in any way?!

Does it remind you of Yahweh's presence when He appeared to Moses through a burning bush which was not being consumed by the fire (cf. Exodus 3:2-3)?

Then *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance* (verse 4). The confusion could of also been heightened by the fact that they had no previous experience with all the various languages represented. Acts 2:7-8 says *they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?"* Certainly the events involved with the sending of the Holy Spirit were so unique and miraculous that the people had to "stop in their tracks" and take notice.

These signs, accompanied with hearing these followers of Jesus of Nazareth speak about *the mighty works of God* in these different languages (cf. Acts 2:11), brought many people to a "teachable moment" in their lives. They were searching for an explanation in the midst of what appeared to be mass confusion. Some revealed their "Lutheran" bent: *they were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What*

does this mean?" However, others jumped to the conclusion that they were drunk (cf. Acts 2:12-13). Blend in the fact that these believers themselves were probably confused by it all and you have a picture of mass confusion.

1 Corinthians 14:33 confesses that the Triune *God is not a God of confusion but of peace*, especially as He works by His Holy Spirit through His people in His Church. Because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they didn't have to wallow in confusion because they were also empowered to clear up the confusion. Jesus had promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit, Whom He would send from the Father, would bear witness about Him (cf. John 15:26). So Peter was empowered by the Holy Spirit to explain this unusual experience as being in accord with God's plan which had been revealed hundreds of year prior to this day in the written Scriptures of the Old Testament (cf. Acts 2:16-20).

This is the wonder of God's grace at work once again. Your salvation was the work of Yahweh taking on human form to offer Himself in the person of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice to turn aside His just wrath on you because of your sin. He did it in accordance with His promises in the written Scriptures of the Old Testament. Jesus lived, died and rose again in submission to the written Scriptures of the Old Testament. Thus, as the Holy Spirit works to

carry on the ministry of Jesus in the life of His Church in the world it too is in accordance with the written Word of God. Thus, your life of justification and sanctification is the work of God in you **by His grace as revealed in the Scriptures.**

Only the Holy Spirit can break through your confusion and give you the power to understand your relationship with God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ alone. The Holy Spirit needed to break through more than simply their experiential confusion with the mysterious signs and tongues on that Pentecost Day. He needs to break through the confusion of every single human heart. He needs to break through the heart lost in the darkness of sin while the sinner thinks he is living in an enlightened way, confident and in control. While he may seem to have a good grasp on life from his own perspective he is actually confused spiritually.

Only the Holy Spirit can clear up your confusion of life lived in the presence of your holy God. 1 Corinthians 2:11-12 says that *no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received . . . the Spirit Who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God* (i.e. understand His grace). Thus, any “spiritual experience” which may take place in your life—and even confuse you—is brought to the Holy Spirit **in the written Scriptures.** He will clear up your confusion in the same

manner He cleared up the confusion for those people gathered in the temple in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in May of 33 AD. **He will bring you to the Person & Work of Jesus Christ in the place where Jesus has said He will meet you.**

The Old Testament Church was required to meet Yahweh at a place of His determination (cf. Deuteronomy 12:5). That's why it is probable that these people were in the house of the Lord, the temple in Jerusalem. Likewise, the New Testament Church meets Jesus at a place of His determination. He stated it in Matthew 18:20 when He promised that *where two or three are gathered in His name, there He is among them*. How is He among us here? In the same way He was in that place with those three thousand believers who repented of their sins, were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in May of 33 AD.

There was no mass confusion as to where they would find Jesus from that day on. Acts 2:42 says *they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching* (i.e. what we have in the written New Testament Scriptures). *They devoted themselves to . . . the fellowship* (i.e. the believers gathered in worship). *They devoted themselves to . . . the breaking of bread* (i.e. the Lord's Supper where Jesus is present in His body and blood dispensed to you for the forgiveness of sins). *They devoted themselves to . . . the prayers* (i.e. the worship of God

in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:24)).

Are you confused? You need not be. Jesus said in John 6:44 →
*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.
And I will raise him up on the last day.* Are you experiencing the
spiritual battles of guilt over your sins which haunt you day and night?
The Holy Spirit is drawing you to the cross of Jesus where He carried
your sins for you. Repent, trust in His atoning work for the forgiveness
of your sins and walk in the gift of the Spirit. Are you experience the
spiritual battles of living the delusion that you are in control of your life
only to feel many times like it is totally out of control? The Holy Spirit
is drawing you to the cross of Jesus where He carried your idolatrous
sin for you. God gives you His grace and the Holy Spirit to receive His
grace with thanksgiving, not confusion, and to respond with praise
and living a new life now and eternally! Amen.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

(Galatians 5:25)

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