

The Turning Points of Pentecost (Part 4) – Acts 2:1-13

Acts 2:1-13. If you're joining us for the first time, either here or via livestream, welcome.

This is our 4th and final message in this passage, as we find some major turning points in God's work of redemption. Turning points God *continues* to use . . .

To compel us to live his way and accomplish his work.

Acts 2:1-4 (Outline). [1] *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place* [the believers]. [2] *And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.* [3] *And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.* [4] *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

The **first turning point** we found, is that . . .

1. At Pentecost, the gospel became central (v1)

2. At Pentecost, God's presence became palpable (v2-3)

3. At Pentecost, God's Spirit became personal (v4)

Personal to everyone who believes and repents. A turning point we fleshed out with a series of **questions**. Like . . .

A. Who is the Holy Spirit?

B. How and when do we receive the Holy Spirit?

C. What happens when we receive the Holy Spirit?

D. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Concluding that he overwhelms us from the outside in, occupies us from the inside out, and controls us more and more over the course of our entire lives.

Which only leaves one more question:

E. What is speaking in tongues?

From v4. *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit* [it says] *and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Now, if that's all we had, we'd be asking the question without much in the way of answers. But thankfully, Paul spends an entire *chapter* on tongues in 1 Cor 14.

And tells us first of all, that speaking in tongues is a God-given gift. (1 Cor 12:10-11) 2nd, tongues are unintelligible. B/c *no one understands* them. Not even the speaker. (1 Cor 14:2,13-14)

3rd, they're prayers. B/c they're spoken *not to men but to God* Paul says. (1 Cor 14:2)

And 4th, they require an *interpreter*. With only 1 person speaking at a time. (14:27)

So . . .

• **Normally, speaking in tongues is the God-given ability to pray or praise in syllables not understood by the speaker or hearers.**

➤ But here in Acts 2, those speaking in tongues *are* understood. In various languages unique to the *hearers*. V6.

At this sound [the sound of the rushing wind and speaking in tongues] *the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.*

Each person in the crowd, heard each of the speakers, not in unintelligible syllables, but in their own language. Different than normal.

And those who spoke, did so *as the Spirit gave them utterance* it says (4b). As if it was a *one-time* gifting. For that occasion only. That moment. Even more different.

And if they were speaking at the *same* time, which seems to be the *implication* given the mayhem of the moment, it's even *further* off the beaten path.

So as different as speaking in tongues *normally* is, this was even stranger.

Which is one of the reasons . . .

• **We agree to only use tongues in private.**

In our *private* prayer life.

As a church, we choose to refrain from *public* expressions of tongues, while in no way trying to control or forbid your personal, *individual* expressions with the Lord.

And we do so, b/c first of all . . .

1. Their meaning is uncertain

6 reasons. Very quickly. Starting with the fact that we don't even know for sure what "speaking in tongues" refers to.

Here in Acts 2, it's foreign languages that are *known*. Or at least *heard*.

While in 1 Cor 14, it's unintelligible *speech*. Completely *unknown*.

2. They're optional

Tongues don't *have* to be expressed publicly, so we don't.

Paul says in 1 Cor 14:27, *if any speak in a tongue*. Implying that not all do.

And if there's not an interpreter, he says to *keep silent in church*, and speak to yourself and to God (1 Cor 14:28).

Implying that they're *optional* in gatherings of God's people.

3. Paul prefers normal speech

He says in 1 Cor 14:19 – *In church* [gatherings of believers] *I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

In church, where even 2 or 3 are gathered, he prefers normal speech. That both he *and* the hearers understand.

4. They're highly subjective

Nobody's Bible came with an MP3 of examples. And the Bible doesn't *tell* us what they sound like. So we have no objective way of determining . . .

What a legitimate expression even sounds like.

5. They're risky

Risky in that they alienate *un-believers*. 1 Cor 14:23 – *Will they not say that you are out of your minds?* They will. So tongues risk alienating people who don't believe.

And, tongues risk drawing more attention to the *speaker* than to the Lord.

And causing division instead of unity. They're risky.

Which is why we choose to refrain from *public* expressions, while in no way trying to control your *private* expressions.

6. Our culture is different

It seems that tongues were used *most* in the Bible, where . . .

(A) The Scriptures were not readily accessible.

(B) The language barrier was significant.

(C) The gospel witness was weak or minimal.

All of which is *vastly* different than our day and age (**Summary**). Especially in North America. So for those 6 reasons, we agree to only use tongues in private.

And if you'd like a more *thorough* coverage of all that, check out the messages I preached on this several years ago.

They're highlighted on the front page of our website, in the blog section.

- Either way, suffice it to say that we agree to use tongues only in private. But at Pentecost, they were yet another way that God drew attention to a massive turning point in his work to save and sanctify the world. A turning point where his Spirit became personal.

Which brings us to the 4th turning point. That . . .

4. At Pentecost, our mission became possible (v4)

Possible to do what? Be his witnesses. The very thing Jesus spoke of 10 days earlier.

Acts 1:8 – “*You will receive power [he said] when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” We’ve talked about this before.

Our *mission* in life, is to be his representatives. His ambassadors. His couriers.

Representatives who testify to who Jesus is and what he’s done.

Ambassadors who implore people to be reconciled to him. (2 Cor 5:20)

Couriers who proclaim his gospel to the nations. (Mk 13:10)

And disciples who make *other* disciples. (Mt 28:18-20)

At Pentecost, our mission became possible, b/c the Holy Spirit empowered each and every person to fulfill it. And still does.

He *still* empowers us, individually *and* collectively . .

- **To represent Jesus and make disciples**

That’s our mission. Just like Jesus said. “Go and make disciples.” (Mt 28:18-20)

As in spread the word, lead people to Christ, and help them grow and mature.

So that they *too* can make disciples.

Did you catch that? Our mission is to make disciples who make disciples. True.

That’s why (2 **Tim 2:2**) Paul tells Timothy – *What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*. Entrust what *you* have Paul says, to disciples who can make other disciples.

You haven’t fulfilled the mission, until the person you *led* to the Lord, can do the same.

Until they can reproduce themselves.

Which means you not only need to *tell* them the gospel, and help them *embrace* it, but they need to be able to articulate to *others*. Repeat it. Share it. Spread it.

Leading someone to Christ is only *half* the mission.*****

- So how about it? Can you explain the Good News of Jesus Christ? Such that someone who hears it not only knows what it is, but how to embrace it? Are you ready at a moment’s notice to give an answer for the hope that lies within you? So that your hearers can have that same hope?

I hope so. B/c that’s part of what *Easter* was about this year.

Knowing and embracing the gospel for *yourself*, and being able to *share* it with others. Otherwise the mission’s *im*-possible. Holy Spirit or not.

You have to have the knowledge.

- Which is why I gave you this **Gospel Card**. And why Becky and I reviewed it with our Small Group. And would encourage you to do the same. And on your *own* from time to time. It’s not just for *un*-believers, but believers. So the Holy Spirit has something to draw on. Something more than just *zeal* to work with. More than just a *burden* for people.

Give him something to work with. *Know* the gospel so he can bring it to mind.

That’s what he did with the believers at Pentecost. In sharing the mighty works of God.

They knew them, and he used them.

And he’ll do the same with you, if you know *the* mighty work. (**Summary**)

And when he does, we’ll fulfill our mission, our ministry . . .

- **Even though we’re opposed. (v13)**

That’s the next part. Our mission is possible, even though we’re resisted. Contested.

Countered. V11b

We hear them telling in our own tongues [the people said] the mighty works of God.” [12] And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” [13] But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Some were amazed, and others scoffed. Mocked. Accusing them of being drunk. Out of their minds.

Opposition. Happened then, happens now.

- B/c no work of God goes unopposed. None. And more people would stick with it I think, if they understood and accepted that from the get-go. His work *in* you doesn’t go unopposed, & his work *through* you doesn’t go unopposed. B/c not only does *Satan* hate what we do, but many *people* do as well. People who are Satan’s tools.

People who hate us b/c we dare speak truth to them.

People *convicted* of their sin, and lash out.

People with an ax to grind, and want a pound of flesh.

People whose *worldview* is different, and hate our disagreement.

People with issues, but living in denial.

No work of God goes unopposed. B/c Satan hates it, and so do many people.

- And yet, it’s still possible to fulfill our mission. Not only did Jesus *promise* to build his church, but he’s given us his *Spirit* to make it happen. To stay the course and *keep* the faith. *Despite* those who scoff. *Despite* those who revile. *Despite* those who persecute and *utter all kinds of evil against* us. (Mt 5:11)

Never doubt, and never give up. (**Summary**)

B/c at Pentecost, with the Spirit, our mission became possible. And still is.

And then last . . .

5. At Pentecost, the nations became reachable (v5-13)

That's the 5th turning point. Every tribe, tongue, and nation became reachable. V5.

[5] *Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.* [Most likely dwelling there temporarily for the feast of Pentecost.]

[6] *And at this sound [the wind and the tongues] the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.*

[7] *And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? [Are they not uneducated folk who only speak Aramaic? That's the idea of that question.]*

[8] *And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? [9] Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, [10] Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, [11] both Jews and proselytes [i.e. Gentiles converted to Judaism], Cretans and Arabians [people of all types]—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."*

It's a list (**Map – ESV Study Bible, 2083**) that covers most of the countries with a Jewish population in that day. People from far and wide. Literally.

[12] *And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"*

[13] *But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."*

➤ At Pentecost, the nations became reachable, *b/c they were there*. They were present. Just like they're here.*****

And *they understood*. Hearing about the mighty works of God in their native tongues. IOW the barriers of Babel were overcome for a time. Remember that? Genesis 11? *When the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.* (Gen 11:9)

At Pentecost, it was reversed for a time. So they could understand.

3rd, *they were gripped*. Grippled by the content, and gripped by the means. The gospel and the Spirit. Causing them to open their hearts and *receive* the truth.

And last, the nations became reachable like never before at Pentecost, *b/c they returned*. Those who heard, *returned* to their countries. It's an assumption, but a pretty safe one. People came from all over for the festivals in Jerusalem, and then went home. Went *back* to their nations.

And when they did, they no doubt *spread* the word. Proclaimed the mighty works of God *themselves*. *Recounted* what they had seen and heard.

The point is this: the barriers of Babel were overcome for a time, to give the gospel a push. A push to reach the *nations*.

• And it's up to us to keep reaching them.

Us. Whether they're here or there, if we don't go, they'll never know. If we don't learn their language, they'll never understand. If we don't share, they'll never be gripped. The means of which we *have*. Like never before. We have the means to *go*, we have the means to *learn*, and we have the means to *share* like never before.

And nobody's going to do it for us. This is our day, and it's up to us.

Whether that means crossing the street in your *own* neighborhood, or crossing the ocean to another *country*.

At Pentecost, the nations became reachable, and it's up to us to *keep* reaching them.

➤ I love the story of **George Liele** in that respect. George Liele was the first American missionary, in 1782. Not the 1st African-American missionary, but the 1st missionary. The first resident, the first citizen, to leave *here*, and go elsewhere, in order to reach the nations. And it wasn't *easy*. Never is.

Born a slave in Virginia, Liele was taken to Georgia, where he was converted in 1773 in the church of his master. Whereupon he soon became concerned about the spiritual condition of his fellow slaves, and began preaching to them. He crossed the street.

When the Revolutionary War started a few years later, he sided with the British along with his master, as many did in that day, and was eventually set free in 1778. This enabled Liele to minister and preach even more, so that he went on to pastor a Baptist church.

But as the war wound down in 1782, it wasn't safe for him to remain in Georgia. There was a risk he would be punished for siding with the British, and re-enslaved by his former master's heirs.

So Liele obtained a loan by indenturing himself as a servant to a British officer, and secured passage with his wife and four children, on a ship bound for Jamaica. Where they landed in January 1783, soon repaid the debt, and once again obtained his full freedom.

But his departure from America wasn't just for the purpose of escaping slavery. Almost immediately, he got permission to preach in Jamaica as well. And over the next 30 years, he not only baptized hundreds of converts himself, but started multiple churches. So that by the time he died in 1820, some 8,000 people had given their lives to the Lord.
(Adapted from <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/l-m/liele-george-c-1750-1828/>)

➤ If he hadn't gone, they wouldn't have been reached. If he didn't go, they wouldn't know. And neither would we.*****

If people just like us in times past, had stopped crossing yards, stopped crossing streets, stopped crossing lands, and stopped crossing oceans . . .

We wouldn't know the Lord either.

And others won't know if *we* don't go. If we don't cross. (**Summary**)

Some of you are being called to cross your yard and have a Backyard Bible Club this summer. Or cross the street to help with our food pantry, in West Davenport. Or cross the river to minister with our church plant.

And some of you are being called to cross the ocean and be a missionary.

Our mission is possible and the nations are reachable, but we have to cross. We have to go. And we have to share. It's up to us.

Pray – Lord, give us the desire and burden to reach those around us. And those unlike us.

And those far from us. And even farther from you. Give us the desire, and find us faithful. No matter what the opposition. For your glory, our joy, and their life.