

“Equipped For Disciple Making”

Acts 2:1-21

Psalm 104:24-34

Genesis 11:1-9

John 14:8-17

The psalmist in Psalm 104:24, 35b boldly declares, “O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures... Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD.” Pentecost unleashes the Spirit upon all people. The church is born in Acts 2 and sent into all the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ that salvation is available to all. Yes, eternal life and daily redemption from the grip of death.

Jesus came to create a new community, a community that is about the collective whole and its betterment.¹ Yet, bewilderment preoccupied Philip. If Philip could see the Father, then he would believe that Jesus was who he claimed to be. J.N. Sanders writes, “Men [People] hanker for the certainty which sight seems to give. But sight is not given us in this life, only faith.”² Faith in Jesus Christ equips us to see God at work through us in making, building, forming, growing, inspiring, and shaping disciples. Acts 2:17, 21 reads, “... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh... your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams... everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” The Spirit is at work and on the move in each one of us.

¹Adapted from Jim Wallis’ *On God’s Side* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2013), 25-42.

²J.N. Sanders, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 322.

It was the Feast of Weeks or Shavuot. Shavuot, the third of the festivals of Judaism, was a joyful one, in which the first fruits of the harvest were offered to God. Christians, a large immigrant population, and worshipping Jews gathered in Jerusalem. And the Holy Spirit came as promised; the One who would remind humanity what Jesus taught and did. The demonstration of many languages was impressive with everyone understanding in their own “tongue.” This was not a reversal of Babel making everyone speak in one language, but an empowerment for the followers of Jesus to tell the gospel in every language.

In John 14:12 Jesus says, “...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.” Human says, “I cannot depend on anyone but myself.” Jesus says to depend on him. Jesus spoke of inclusion, peace, reconciliation, and wholeness. Faith in Jesus Christ leads us to do as Jesus did. Recall Geneva’s Vision Statement: “All are welcome here. Really, we mean that! All are welcome! Just as God receives all who believe in Jesus Christ, Geneva aspires to be an inclusive congregation worshipping, learning, connecting, giving, and serving together.” As we continue to grieve and move forward because of May 15th, we must lean into becoming increasingly more inclusive and welcoming of the other. Our love for our siblings in Christ at the Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian Church advances in inclusion and welcome through our words and deeds.

The primary concern of the gospel is not seeing God but experiencing Jesus’ relationship with God and what that means for Jesus’ followers.” Love is seen when we live our lives in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The great 16th century Anabaptist reformer Menno Simons writes, “True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the

naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it, it binds up that which is wounded, it has become all things to all people.”³ Jesus’ commands to love has deep significance for the Church and how Christians live in societies around the world. Jesus commands us to love God and love others. Period.

The men and women on the plain of Shinar saw God. It wasn’t enough. Philip saw God. It wasn’t enough. But faith in God is enough. The Holy Spirit came to all people at the Feast of Weeks. The content of enough is God. “Fill-a me up, come-a Holy Spirit. So many things try to fill me up. So many things try to weigh me down. Fill-a my heart now until you stay and chase the other things away.”⁴ God fills us with love, a love which is strong, deep, and healing. This love brings us into communion, intimacy with God and one another. This love is powerful, and it reminds us that God is at work, twenty-four-seven in this world. How? Through your life, my life, and the lives of all followers of Jesus.

Let us not forget Babel, however. We’re addicted to Babel. The rugged individualist is “knighted” in Babel. Babel makes injustice thrive. It blesses the rich and curses the poor. Babel makes enemies and wars. Babel beckons us to focus on ourselves and ignore looking to God. Genesis 11:4 reads, “...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.” Babel is important for Pentecost. It does not reverse the consequences of the tower. Rather, ethnic, linguistic,

³Taken from Richard Kriegbaum, “President’s Message” in *Pacific*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2016.

⁴Peter Choplin wrote these lyrics in *Fill-a Me Up*.

and cultural differences are to be preserved and held together by the bonding power of the Holy Spirit. And it is not only ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences that are to be preserved and held together by the bonding power of the Holy Spirit. The differences in sexual orientation, gender identity, as well as racial and gender equity are to be preserved and held together by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵

Being a church that is inclusive welcomes all. Period. A church likes this gathers AND scatters. Fans are turned into followers AND consumers become missionaries. Inclusion is AND people live in authentic community.⁶ So, if you're tired of being judgmental, self-righteous, and critical; if you're fed up with being motivated by fear; and if you want to be a part of a group of people who love worshipping, learning, connecting, giving, and serving together then embrace Geneva's new future. That new future unmask both false divisions and false unity. That new future evokes fruitful differences and faithful unity. You are equipped for making, building, forming, growing, inspiring, and shaping disciples. Experience Geneva's Mission: Remember, tell, and live the way of Jesus by being just, kind, and humble.⁷ Amen!

This sermon was preached (for the In-Person, Online, and Village TV 6 congregations) on Sunday, 05 June 2022 by the Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh at Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, California

⁵I am grateful for the thinking and writing of Cameron B. R. Howard, Leanne Van Dyk, Gail Ramshaw, Sandra Hack Polaski, Stephanie M. Crumpton, Sandra Hack Polaski, and Stephanie M. Crumpton in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery and Cynthia L. Rigby, editors, *Connections, Year C, Volume 2* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 318-320, 320-322, 323-325, 326-328, 329-330, 331-333, and 333-335.

⁶Adapted from Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *AND: The Gathered and Scattered Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 26.

⁷Some ideas in this paragraph are adapted from the thinking and writing of Leanne Van Dyk in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery and Cynthia L. Rigby, editors, *Connections, Year C, Volume 2*, 320-322.

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