



What are the foundational stories of your family? The ones that are told at a funeral or at a family roast perhaps on someone's 65th birthday or retirement. These are the stories that bind us together with shared laughter and a sense of who we are together. We are stronger because we have memories of our times together. We know who we are because we know where we came from.

Our readings today remind us that God created all of us as one people. And, we did not always follow what God hoped and dreamed for us; witness the reading from Genesis and the story we call the Tower of Babel. Rather than relying upon God for our direction, we humans decided we would build a tower that stretched to the heavens so we could make a name for ourselves. We would rely upon ourselves rather than upon God who created us. And God, understandably displeased, responds by reminding those building that it is God who is the source of all and the languages of the people are confused and the people are scattered. Each of them perceives someone who does not speak "our" language as "other" and our divisions and distrust permeate all that we do and how we understand our role in the world. We failed to trust God and the price of that failure is conflict among ourselves. Power struggles exist to this day.

The counterpart to Tower of Babel is the reading from the Acts of the Apostles. The day of Pentecost is the feast of the spring barley harvest in the Jewish tradition. It is 50 days after Easter in the Christian tradition. Pentecost is referred to as the birth of the church, in part because this is the first scene in our New Testament of such a gathering, the descending of the Holy Spirit through tongues of fire upon each of those present and the ability for those present to hear and understand anyone and everyone else – language is not a barrier on this day. The dream of God is alive and well on this day. We are one family. We have one goal: to love and serve the Lord.

How quickly we fall back into our usual bickering and separation, though. The dream of God that we may be one seems to be a dream beyond our reach most of the time. That is a shame because we can do much good when we can set aside our differences and work together for the good of all.

Our baptismal font is inscribed with the words: One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism. This is the dream of God and what we saw manifested on Pentecost. We speak on this in our Creed: I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Our reality is often different.

And this is perhaps where today's reading from Acts is helpful. We are reminded that there was a time when we all were able to understand the other regardless of language. We were one in Christ celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit through tongues of fire. On that day our sons and our daughters shall prophesy and our young men shall see visions and our old men shall dream dreams. No one is left out as Peter reminds us that even upon slaves – both men and women – the Spirit will be poured out and they will prophesy. No one is exempt – all are children of God, loved by God, and have a place and a task in ensuring the kingdom of heaven comes closer to earth.

In this same vein, Jesus speaking to Philip and the other apostles reminds them that when we believe in Jesus we can do the works that Jesus did: caring for the hungry, the sick, visiting those in prison. We are commissioned and empowered to carry on the work of loving our neighbor as ourselves. When we do these things, Jesus is in us and we in him. We are connected in ways that defy logic. Jesus gifts us with his peace – all that he is and all that he does is rooted in God and so the peace can be given to us which surpasses anything the world can offer. Our hearts do not need to be afraid or troubled when we center our life on God.

Even though the world may question our sanity – thinking perhaps we are drunk at 9 o'clock in the morning – we are not in the traditional sense of being drunk on alcohol. We may, though, be drunk on the Holy Spirit who has showed us what is possible when we set aside our differences and worship together and acknowledge that we are all one in Christ Jesus.

Our foundational stories as Christians include Creation: when God made all that is and declared it very good. Christmas: when God took on human flesh in Jesus to show us in this life how to live. Easter: when God reminded us that death is not the end. And Pentecost: when God reminded us through the Holy Spirit that despite outward appearances and experiences we are all one creation, loved by God, and our role while living is to do what we can to reunite with others with God as the center of our being, so that none may be hungry, lonely or separated from family. You are called, especially on this day, to feel once again the tongues of fire on your head and to speak of your faith even as others may say you are drunk at 9 o'clock in the morning. You are called, especially on this day, to find your ministry in this world and to go forth to love and serve God using your gifts and talents. Do not be afraid for Jesus has given us his peace, which surpasses any that the world can give. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid, but rest in the knowledge and love of God. **Amen.**