

# Coffee to Go | Pentecost Sunday | Year C

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Pentecost, Holy Spirit, diversity, inclusion, Acts 2, disciples, Festival of Weeks.

## SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Karin Peter

### Karin Peter 00:28

Welcome to Coffee to Go, where we center ourselves in the scriptures, seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karin Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith. We welcome you on the journey. So, we are at the Sunday of Pentecost. And Pentecost means 50th day, and it was on the 50th day after Passover that you celebrated with a festival. I forget which one it is, but I'm pretty sure we talk about it later on in this podcast. So, there is a festival going on 50 days later, which 50th (Penta) so, we have Pentecost for Christians. Pentecost marks the 50th and final day of the Easter season. Because, as we've talked about before, Christians borrowed from lots of different faith traditions to make our own traditions and practices. At Pentecost, the Spirit moves among the disciples and the crowds of onlookers. And it is on Pentecost that the disciples begin their Spirit-filled, or Spirit-empowered, or Spirit-blessed, whatever you want to, however you want to envision that, but their ministry with the Spirit. So at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit's depicted as flames of fire, or as a dove descending, or as wind or breath. So, that's, that's our blurb to get us into the Pentecost frame of mind. So, at this point, where are we with Jesus? Well, Jesus has ascended to the Creator and left the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit, and so they are in Jerusalem. It's busy. It's a festival. The crowds are from all over, and the disciples take this opportunity to speak to people.

### Blake Smith 02:16

Yeah, before I read the passage, I was just thinking that you were talking about Pentecost Karin. I think you and I, long before Coffee to Go ever came around, we did an episode on Passover a while back, so, and I'm not, wasn't quick enough to think about looking that up ahead of time and seeing what number it was. But if anybody wants to hear more about Pentecost, some of its origins, that would be good.

### Karin Peter 02:39

I remember that. That was one of my first assignments with Project Zion was Common Grounds, which covers the liturgical seasons and holy days, gives explanations, and yes, you did the Pentecost episode. So yay.

### Blake Smith 02:52

And that was long before I had any thought of being technically and deeply connected with Project Zion, and here I am.

### Karin Peter 03:03

It was a precursor. It was a precursor for great things. There we go.

### Blake Smith 03:07

Alright. So, our passage today comes from Acts, and it is the second chapter, the first through the 21st verse, a very familiar text to us, but let's listen to that today or Pentecost.

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 a 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 people under heaven, living in Jerusalem, and at this sound, the crowd gathered as, 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 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, the 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, "Fellow Jews 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 portance in the heaven above and signs on the earth below. Blood and fire and smokey 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."

So why does this matter? This passage, in the midst of what is taking place in the United States right now, is really important for us to hear, not just because of the Pentecost season, but because the importance of diversity that God captures in this through what is taking place. But first, you know, sometimes we relegate the Spirit to live only in church or at our favorite campgrounds, or, you know, when we're gathered for religious life...

**Karin Peter** 06:38

And when we want to pay attention, yeah.

**Blake Smith** 06:40

Well, well, there is that, right? But what Acts describes is the the Spirit really invading, if you will, a community gathering. It's a festival. They're gathered together for festival, the Festival of Weeks. So, some might say it is a religious gathering. But this is people from all over and I think the when we see this list of all of the diaspora who have come together from all over, who speak different languages, who have different cultures, even though they might ascribe to the same religion, they come at it from different perspectives. And what's happening here? They're celebrating in this Festival of Weeks, the first fruits and, and here, what we see is that the Spirit is the first fruit, or good gift from God to all those who follow Jesus. Now I, Karin, you, you brought this, you caught this. And I did read it in one of the commentaries as well. And I've never really caught the significance of it. And I can't decide whether to be offended or ...

**Karin Peter** 07:54

Oh no, I thought of you looking at this.

**Blake Smith** 08:02

Verse seven when they say, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? Well, I thought, you know, I've just taken that at its word. But there's a little fun, fun fact, if you will. It might be fun for some, for

those of us who have perhaps a bit of a stereotype. Galilee was kind of the, Galileans would have been dismissed, probably, as country bumpkins. I mean, they're, they're actually saying something in this when they're saying, aren't these all Galileans? They're, they're speaking pretty intelligently in, in that we can understand them, you know, but, but their accents are different, and so maybe they have a Galilean drawl. And, of course, me coming from the south, I say, Well, maybe so. But, so, I'm not sure if I'm offended by that, but it is important to pick, just to pick that up. I think I found it both fascinating and a little funny that they're picked out because of their drawl. But it is saying something, and I think that probably our southern listeners can understand, that many of them, I know, I have heard, you know, southerners, because of their drawl, they must not be intelligent. They're just country bumpkins. So whether it's true or not, it is a perception. And so, so we've got, we've got this going on, and, and goodness, God even loves the rednecks.

**Karin Peter 09:43**

The whole idea of, if they're from Galilee, they're obviously uneducated. Why do they know how to speak other languages there? I mean, it must be that they've been drinking or whatever, which I don't know how drinking makes you all of a sudden a linguist. But nonetheless, I. To be from Galilee, that pops up all the time, and when we're looking at New Testament Scriptures, and we forget that that was a rural backwater. Where this started, was a rural backwater, and the things that Jesus and the disciples did, challenged that culture as much as it challenged the urban or the Metropolitan places where the disciples went, they were turning over tables, so to speak, in all of those areas. So, all of us got to feel uncomfortable at some point, right? That's the great equalizer of the New Testament. Is it at some point is an ouch point for all of us.

**Blake Smith 10:39**

Yeah, absolutely. And so you can imagine, I mean, if you think just about the cultures across the US, where a lot of our listeners are, we come, when we come together for World Conference, when we come together for that type of gathering, we bring all of this variation, all the dialects, all the cultures, all of those things to the table. And so it's important here for us to see that in that situation, the spirit touches and reclaims all of the people where they are. I've always loved this passage because of the sense, and I probably did mention this even when we did the Pentecost episode, One of the things that I love about this is, for me, it represents God speaks to us in our own language. God meets us where we are, and it is in a variety of places, and there's no one left out. Everyone here could hear in their own language what was being shared. And so, this the spirit breaks through barriers. Wendy Farley writes about the endless energy of the spirit to infiltrate our hearts and others, again, look at it as a Spirit breaking through barriers. Stephanie Crumpton, another commentary writer said something that I really like. She says, 'Peter invites us to think about what it means for the Holy Spirit to come into our own lives, so that we, too can be empowered to carry news of God's deeds in a way that makes the good news accessible in relevant and tangible ways.' It's really a contemporary way to look at this people being able to hear. So, we are called as Christians to celebrate diversity, not diminish it or call it out or try to get rid of it, but to, in fact, celebrate it and then be prepared to share the gospel in ways that it reaches people in relevant ways that meet them where they are. So, here God is casting the diversity of the people as a primary tool. It's not just happenstance, but it's a primary tool for God's presence, and it's the antithesis of the culture of suspicion. This really, again, touches something deep for us who live in a culture where diversity and inclusion is being cast as suspicious or traitorous or unwelcome, even by, or especially by, those who claim to be Christian, that is not, we're not talking about just people in politics. We're talking about people who claim the name of Christ, who are speaking out against diversity and inclusion and then, and we just want to hold true to the fact that in, that God is from the, from the beginning, and especially in this passage, lifting up diversity and inclusion as a key to the gospel message.

**Karin Peter 14:12**

I think, right now where we're sitting, just having, by the time this airs, just having World Conference completed, and having our diverse experience that was diminished because people are suspicious of diversity, and that affects people's welcome in the US. It affects people's ability to enter the US or even even fearful of that, we need to hear this loud and clear today in wherever we are and wherever people are hearing our voices, that God embraces diversity, and that is shown over and over again in the scriptures, humans have recorded these encounters with God that help us navigate ourselves into a place that we really can say that we're about unity and diversity.

**Blake Smith 15:14**

Absolutely. And you know, if any of our listeners have not had the personal experience of being at a World Conference where all of these cultures come together. It might be hard to imagine exactly the power and significance and depth and richness that comes in that kind of community. But, so all, in those cases, all we can say is it truly, truly does. And I mean, I get a sense of what's happening here in Acts because of experiences in the World Conference setting, and just in our tradition, it's extra important. So, as you said, you know, God embraces diversity. And because that, because that is true, so should we... period.

**Karin Peter 16:05**

Yeah, absolutely. That's your Pentecost sermon there, Blake, that's it. God embraces, [all right, all right] diversity... period, that's, that's it.

**Blake Smith 16:17**

So let's talk about a few questions that we might ask ourselves this week, one is, what barriers does the spirit need to break through in my heart, mind and life? I'm just going to leave that wide open. Doesn't need any explanation. We just need to be honest with ourself and ask, what are those barriers that the spirit needs to break through? Second would be the presence of the Spirit has been described in lots of different ways, as we read through the Scriptures, or even in personal experience, it's described as wind or breath or fire or love. So the question is, how do I experience the Holy Spirit? What is a meaningful way to understand the Spirit in my life? And finally, how do I support diverse perspectives, practices and cultures in my community? Because, again, diversity is key,

**Karin Peter 17:18**

Absolutely. So, I've really enjoyed these explorations that we do on Coffee to Go because I learned something new, you know, every time that we prepare for a podcast. So, this week, I think one of the ways we can experience this Pentecostal scripture and let ourselves rest in it during the week is to just get a little piece of paper and list seven words that represent barriers you carry. It might be names of people. It might be habits or practices that you feel like you need to deal with. I mean, there's all kinds of things that cause barriers in us -- barriers to healthy relationships with God, ourselves, others and the earth. So, list just seven words, one for each day of the week, and then each day this week, pick one of them and imagine, or envision the spirit breaking through that barrier and what that looks like and feels like in your life. And you might need to do it a couple of times each day for that specific barrier, but when you feel like you've gotten some kind of insight into what that might mean for you, cross that off and go on to the next word. See how, see how far you make it in your list for next week, I'll be doing the same.

**Blake Smith 18:34**

I like that you put a limit on list seven words. That way we don't have to be overwhelmed with perhaps all the barriers that are there, let's just identify seven and work that.

**Karin Peter** 18:44

I'm going to be a realist in this. Yeah.

**Blake Smith** 18:48

Right. Well, our blessing today is very familiar blessing, because it comes from campfire tune that we have sung for years and years and years, and we also sing it in church, and my daughter say I shouldn't sing things. And so I've gone back and forth whether or not I should sing this or say it. I'm just going to say it this today. But if you're a singer, you know, if you do the mission prayer every day, this week, I would suggest, let this be your morning prayer, or at least part of it.

Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Amen. [Amen].

Blessings for this Pentecost and thanks for joining us here today. We invite you as always, to join us here at Coffee to Go for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.