

Pentecost Sermon

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Good Morning.

Buenos días mi nombre es Ángela y es hermoso estar aquí. Mi español es muy mal. This is where I have been stuck in my Spanish for 20 years. In the beginning of my language journey a friend suggested that my Spanish will not improve until it is no longer a game and is more like sink or swim. His point was that until I was desperate, my Spanish will continue to be a game that I play around with resulting in little fluency. I did not want to believe him. But I think he is correct.

I think about this with the Pentecost story. The drama and chaos challenge the disciples to go beyond their thinking brain. The dramatic story with wind and fire and strange language seems to bring the disciples to their knees.

I wonder if this is how the spiritual journey moves, when life is easy I bop along, playing. When my spiritual journey brings me to my knees it is no longer a game and I truly connect with God and surrender and embodiment is necessary.

I'm going to propose that what's being instructed here in the Pentecost scene of Acts is that we need to get out of our heads and into our body and heart space. For someone who spends much of my time in my head, this is a tall order.

Let's pivot to a breath practice called the Five Senses Grounding Awareness.

Take a deep breath in and notice any **smells**, and savor them.

Take a deep breath in and **touch** your face, and notice the warmth, coolness, softness.

Take a deep breath in and **look** around and notice this space, those around you, the colors, just notice.

Now take a deep breath in and **taste**, maybe you have a drink with you or gum or on Zoom maybe you have food. Just notice.

Now take a deep breath in and **listen**. Hear your breath or the hum around you, notice. Just breathe and notice.

Now try to feel, hear, taste, smell and see the Pentecost story.

I'm imagining the disciples hanging out in the house relaxing, suddenly a violent wind comes, certainly unsettling then all speaking in different languages, that's got to be overwhelming. Lot's of stimulation and confusion, did they use all their senses or remain in their headspace, of what is going on here?? They had a body /heart experience that was undeniable. The crowd appear to try to understand it through their thinking mind.

In the book, *The New Testament, Methods and Meanings*, by Warren Carter and Amy-Jill Levine, they write about Pentecost. “ Some from the crowd do not see a miracle; rather they conclude that Jesus’ followers are drunk, ‘filled with new wine.’ Peter discounts this explanation by declaring that ‘these are no drunks you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning.’”¹

¹ *The New Testament Methods and Meanings*, By Warren Carter and Amy-Jill Levine, page 102. Abington Press.

It seems the crowd are just using their thinking mind and not all their senses. Hint, hint: did they use their sense of smell?

I believe scripture this week is hinting that we go beyond the headspace into the heart and body. I mean I cannot in my mind understand this Pentecost scene. Like learning a foreign language the body language is very helpful to fully get what is being said. We need to feel the Spirit, we cannot understand it. We have to play the game differently. I wonder if this is where our faith journey accelerates, when we truly surrender to God. We/I say I got nothing and we feel into that journey and step aside for God to lead.

Can you recall a time when you were trying to pray and you couldn't **think** of any good words? Maybe you were in such a state of panic or despair or maybe there was chaos, and wanted something so bad but didn't know how to ask or beg.

My hope today is to tie together the Spirit of Pentecost that comes chaotically to the Spirit in Romans that befriends us in our chaos. This Spirit is hard to understand in our head but makes sense in our body and heart when we let go.

Today we hear in Romans,

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.” My take here is that God is giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit that prays when our thinking brain cannot. And maybe it’s also a nudge to feel a prayer. The Spirit knows our yearnings, maybe the invitation is to embody a prayer. We know this happens more when we are brought to our knees, literally and figuratively.

Last week I was on a bike ride in Yosemite and it was long and hard. The clouds rolled in and the thunderstorm came. I was cold, wet and scared. I had no good prayer words except help. All I could do was to surrender and keep pedaling. At one point Kendall appeared out of nowhere, he chatted with me as we rode up the hill. Then he dropped off. He reappeared later like the wind, sending encouragement. Finally we finished safely. He didn't say much but I felt and smelled the Spirit through him.

We deepen our relationship with God and further this spiritual journey when it isn't a game and the full self

with all of our senses are engaged, that's my take. Because at the end of the day, it is a mystery.

A final thought, Anthony De Mello a Jesuit priest defines mysticism this way, "The art of tasting and feeling in your heart the inner meaning of such stories to the point that they transform you."

Mysticism is one of those 50 cent words, but I think De Mello is saying here we all can be mystics when we stop thinking about God and feel God. We all can engage our 5 senses on this spiritual journey.

Here's a challenge as you move through your week, something will happen that will make you stumble, a tense meeting, a hard exam, an uncertain interaction, don't rush through it, use all your senses and engage with the Holy Spirit.
