

TALK FOR CAREY, PENTECOST SUNDAY, 24.5.26, ACTS 2:1-12, 24-24, 36-39

WHO NEEDS 'DUOLINGO' ...?

When Andre, our Ukrainian friend & worship leader, first turned up at Carey over 4 years ago, he came armed with the Duolingo app on his mobile... Whenever I spoke to him in those early days he would quickly hold up his hand & say 'Stop, stop, stop...'. Then he would get out his mobile and record what I was saying & see if it could translate for him. The wonders of modern technology eh? However, there were still many occasions, as he read the script on his screen, when his face was still furrowed with a frown... Perhaps my Yorkshire accent caused problems. Or it may have simply been the complexities of English, when attempting to translate to the Ukrainian alphabet... Oh we had such fun!...

Andre's puzzled face is echoed here in this Pentecost story of multiple languages. But the puzzlement of this crowd in Jerusalem is **not** at all due to the fact that they **can't** understand what they are hearing. No! The reverse is true here. They **can** understand what these simple Galilean fisherfolk are saying. But they have yet to understand why they can hear them speaking in their native languages. And it's not just that. These people are speaking fluently in all sorts of languages... Not about the weather, or the price of bread that day. They are speaking eloquently about the 'wonders of God'... And everyone in that puzzled & amazed crowd all find themselves asking the same, simple question: **'What on earth does all this mean?'**

So Peter stands up before this vast crowd, from across all regions of the Mediterranean. And he explains what has just happened. The loud noise of a violent wind, which everyone heard, which preceded this phenomenon. And the way that any language barrier was suddenly removed by the out-pouring of God's Holy Spirit. Peter quotes Joel's prophecy. This prophecy begins with these words: 'In the last days'... Let's just quickly note this in passing: ever since the birth of the church at Pentecost we have been living 'in the last days'. We are now living the fulfilment of God's promises to the people of God, many centuries after it was originally written down by Joel (not to mention the many other prophecies in the Old Testament).

You see, the out-pouring of God's Holy Spirit on 'all flesh', was also promised by Jesus, to his disciples, before his death. So, let us not miss the unmistakable

logic of all this. The unmistakeable wonder too... God promised to send the Messiah. The Messiah, Jesus, came to God's people. God also promised, through the prophets **& through Jesus**, that God's Spirit would **also** come. God's Spirit would be poured out on 'all flesh'. Nowhere is this more obvious than at Pentecost. Nowhere is this more obvious than, at this Pentecost Sunday, when people - from various nations - are being baptised & welcomed into membership right here. Alleluia! Praise the LORD that his love & mercy endures through all generations...! Praise God, Jesus is the hope of all nations!

Joel's prophecy speaks of all sorts of people having their tongues loosed & their minds opened. These people are suddenly able to both declare & therefore understand, in a new way, the many signs & wonders of God. Wonders of God manifest across all ages & across all cultures. Wonders of God made **most** obvious in the life & death & resurrection of Jesus, the Holy One of God.

Peter first points to the presence of God's Holy Spirit, at work in the ancient words of the prophets. He then points them to the words & miracles of Jesus - the Holy Spirit was at work through him, very recently. And then Peter is able to point to the wonders that have happened & been declared amongst them that very day. The Spirit working to God's timetable - the same yesterday, today & forever... God's Spirit being poured out on 'all flesh', to again bring God's glory down to this earth.

This is what it means for us to live... 'in the last days'. This is about the coming together of the holy Messiah, Jesus, and the sending of the Holy Spirit straight after, to complete the mission of God's sent One. Like the crowd in Jerusalem that day, nearly 2,000 years ago, we are here to witness & understand the wonders of God... We are here to share in rejoicing at what God has done - in the lives of the people who we have just baptised & welcomed into membership at Carey. We rejoice with them because many of us here also know something of the amazing things God has done for us & among us.

Which brings me to my final challenge, before I then give a personal challenge to all those we have baptised & welcomed into membership here today. When Peter addressed that crowd at Pentecost, he did so knowing that most people he was speaking to did not yet believe in Jesus as their Messiah. And yet he was able to loudly proclaim to them: '***This promise is for all of you***. Both for those who are near & for those who **are** or **feel** 'far off' ... If you are yet to

believe in Jesus & you are feeling puzzled by all you have witnessed today, be re-assured. You can actually be doubly re-assured. Firstly, you are not alone. The people in Jerusalem were similarly puzzled & perplexed. But more important is the second reason to be re-assured. Peter declared without a shadow of a doubt: ***the promises of Jesus, the promise of receiving the Holy Spirit are for - ALL OF YOU HERE...*** (You & you & you & you...).

To everyone here, including those who have yet to believe in Jesus: the promise of the Holy Spirit is very simple. If you repent & believe in Jesus, ***you will receive God's Holy Spirit...*** You will know the joy of God's love. You will know the peace of God's forgiveness. You will know the hope of new life...

Want to know joy, peace & hope? So what does it mean to repent?...

Something I struggled to understand before I came to Christ. Repentance is a 'change of mind', a 'change of heart'. It's about realising that you have been going your own way. It's about asking God to show you God's way instead. What joy it is to find yourself walking in the footsteps of Jesus. Following 'God's footpath', going God's way, is both completely natural & wholly miraculous... Alleluia! Thanks be to God for the good news of Jesus!

I encourage you, if you have not yet come to trust in Jesus: I believe God has brought you to this place, so that you can repent & believe in Jesus. So that you can, like Mark & Zsolt & Ryan here, put your life into God's hands. This might happen today, or it might happen sometime in the future. But I pray that, whatever happens after today, you will at least start earnestly seeking God. There are many people here who can help you in your search. And I pray that, like the thousands of people at Pentecost, you will come to know the joy of following Jesus. Mark & Ryan & Zsolt have all experienced this. They have all received God's Holy Spirit. *(Share a reminder of the testimonies here...?)*

So finally, I come to my charge to the six new members of Carey Baptist Church. To Chima & Chinonso, to Zsolt & Mary, to Mark, to Ryan. I say this: I give thanks to God for each of you. Each one of you is precious to God, even before you came to believe in Jesus. Alleluia! Each one of you has repented & believed in Jesus, God's Promised One. Alleluia! Each one of you has received God's promised Holy Spirit. Alleluia! Each of you, whatever you do, in Jesus' name, God's Holy Spirit will 'enable you...' – to do both ordinary & ***extraordinary*** things. Alleluia! I encourage & exhort you: seek more of God & God's Holy

Spirit. In the words of Jesus: 'Seek first God's kingdom & God's righteousness - & everything else will be added to you'. (Amen?)...

How better to finish than with some of the words of the apostle Paul, as he prays for his fellow believers...? **(READ PHILIPPIANS 1:3-6, 9-11)**

(Complete appeal - people available to pray)