

Fred Craddock, a well known preacher and scholar, tells a rather funny story about a lecture he was giving: A few years ago, when he was speaking at a seminary, just before the first lecture, one of the students stood up and said,

"Before you speak, I need to know if you are Pentecostal."

The room grew silent. Craddock said he looked around for the Dean of the seminary! He was nowhere to be found. The student continued with his quiz right in front of everybody.

Craddock was taken aback, and so he said, "Do you mean do I belong to the Pentecostal Church?" He said, "No, I mean are you Pentecostal?" Craddock said, "Are you asking me if I am charismatic?" the student said, "I am asking you if you are Pentecostal."

Craddock said, "Do you want to know if I speak in tongues?" He said, "I want to know if you are Pentecostal."

Craddock said, "I don't know what your question is." The student said, "Obviously, you are not Pentecostal." He left. (sermons.com)

The first question I also have is "Are we Pentecostal?" Or what do we mean by that when we say some one is Pentecostal? I think this is a good question to ask on this Pentecost Sunday.

The literal meaning for the word Pentecost is 50<sup>th</sup>. In the Old Testament tradition, the Pentecost was an annual festival; it was one of three major festivals (the other two were Passover and Tabernacles). Pentecost was the day of Thanksgiving; the people of Israel gave thanks to God for their harvest and brought the first fruits of their labor to the altar. That celebration was observed about 50 days after the start of the wheat harvest. During this holiday season, people from all over visited Jerusalem to offer their gifts to the Temple.

So it was one of those typical national holidays; people from all over the world come and visit Jerusalem. Just like today, it was many people's desire to visit the Holy Land 2000 years ago; many Jewish people had already spread out throughout the world under the rule of Roman Empire.

On that particular day of Pentecost, however, things were different; simply speaking, the text says, something dramatic happened; it says, the Holy Spirit came

down like a violent wind upon those who were praying in a room. Everyone there asked themselves “What is this?”

What does that mean the Holy Spirit did come down like that? Isn't the Spirit of God here always? What does that mean? It says they were all together in one place to pray. What does that mean? Are we Pentecostal? It says people were filled with the power of God; they began to speak in other tongues. What does that mean?

Some people said, “Oh, these people are drunk!” Peter says, “no, people, listen to me, they are not drunk; it is only 9 O'clock in the morning.”

“This is what is already written in the Scripture in which God says “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions....

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood... then, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

What does that mean? Are we Pentecostal? Or what do we mean by that when we say we are Pentecostal?

First of all, the Pentecost witnesses to the mystery of God. It really tells us that God works among us in a mysterious way. That means, we cannot explain the way God does things. It tells us that prayer has power.

When we were visiting Africa last year, preachers said to me “We are Pentecostal.” They sang and prayed continuously. The university campus we stayed at shook every morning when they prayed... (imagine a stadium where the crowd scream continuously)

One lady came up to me and said she used to be a pimp; but she said God not only healed her soul and mind; God healed her body too. She said God lengthened one of her legs an inch; she used to limp because her two legs were different in length; but when one pastor prayed for her, the shorter leg got an inch longer.

How can you explain such a thing?

The Pentecost reminds us the fundamental fact that God still works among us and miracles do happen. It is prayer that makes all this possible.

Being Pentecostal does not mean that we belong a certain denomination; it means we believe and trust that God still works among us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to pray. Pray for the Spirit of God to touch our hearts; pray for the Power of the Spirit to come upon us every day and night so that we can walk with God in our lives.

The Second Point:

God had a message to send us through the event of Pentecost. It really makes us think what church should be. Church is to show the message of unity in diversity; God not only recognizes but also brings the diverse people to unity, the unity of his church, all through language and culture

Being Pentecostal is not about whether we can speak in tongues or not. It is about accepting and understanding those who speak different languages.

In God's guest list, everyone is included! None is to be excluded to God's party. Each one is invited regardless of religion, race, gender, status of age. All the barriers that divide us throughout the year are to come down.

The salvation is opened to all in Jesus name.

The third Point:

Fear not. Go on; new age is here. With the Spirit of God coming down upon us, there was the dawning of a new age of revelation and divine mission.

Faith in God releases to us the power of the kingdom of heaven. Faith in God is greater than any fear that might grip us.

Someone said: the words "Fear not" appear 365 times in scripture, one for every day of the year.

"Don't be afraid. Only believe!" That's what I hear from the text.

From that day of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples rose up with courage they had never before experienced. They moved from despair to hope; from fear to love.

Their hearts and lives were so opened wide that they could do many miraculous things in the many days to come.

It was a matter of language! Language in our world has often been a matter of power. Who speaks what language and where and when is often an indication of who is allowed to be seen and who is to remain invisible.

But each language has a place in God's world!

The most important language is love.

Pentecost is the invasion of God's time, God's *Kairos*, God's point of view into our lives.

With the power of God's spirit, people are opened in their minds and thoughts and attitudes, it is like people wearing new glasses and suddenly we see people differently.

O Holy Spirit, come down upon us.

Help us to see the things we need to see; help us to dream dreams we need to dream.

O God, break down all the walls of despair and fear. O God, help us to rearrange our world in surprisingly new ways.

O God, O Spirit of God, please open our hearts and eyes.

O God, help us... we want to be Pentecostal people.

(idea/insight for this sermon is from sermon.com)