

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Amen.

You are all looking wonderful in your Pentecost red. See a lot of people responded to that invitation.

Before Jesus' death, He forewarned his disciples that He was going to leave them, but He promised them to send the Holy Spirit to give them peace and counsel and deeper companionship with God. Then, after Jesus' death and resurrection, He appeared to the startled disciples and breathed on them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

But it isn't until this day of Pentecost that there is evidence of the Spirit's wild and unexpected debut. When the day of Pentecost has finally come, the disciples are gathered together in a house, and all of a sudden, the sound of a violent wind descends on them, and fiery tongues rest on the crowns of each of their heads and fill them with the Holy Spirit. The disciples begin to speak in all different and unknown languages, drawing a crowd of devout Jews living in Jerusalem, who represented every nation in the world and who recognize their native languages as the disciples declare God's powerful deeds. They ask perplexed and amazed, "What does this all mean?"

What does it mean? That there are words in every language to talk about who God is and what God has done in the world. What does it mean that God's Spirit has been poured out on every nation of the world? And what does it mean that this Spirit is as wild and unpredictable as a rushing wind falling from heaven?

For me, as I reflect on Pentecost this morning, it means that God is bigger than any one experience of the Holy, and the essence of who God is can't be captured in any one language or even in any one word. Have you ever thought about how God goes by many different names in the Bible, but ultimately in the end transcends them all? One of God's names in Hebrew is Yahweh, but it's always written without vowels because it's too holy to even write down on paper.

In the familiar story of Moses and the burning bush, God self identifies as "I am" because God simply exists. In the Greek God is called the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last letter of their alphabet, meaning the beginning and the end. God is all encompassing, an eternal presence. And later, in the Book of Acts, Paul visits people who are worshiping an unknown God. And Paul goes on to tell them about who this God is that they're worshiping, showing that we don't even need a name to encounter the Holy.

Even with a multitude of languages, our words will always fall short of capturing the vastness of who God is. God will always transcend them all, and God will always be bigger than any one lived experience, including my own. And maybe you can relate. My way of understanding and coming near to God will resemble the fact that I am in the Western hemisphere. I'm an American, I'm a Southern Californian, I'm a Christian, and I'm an Episcopalian. And today, together, we are reading prayers from the Book of Common Prayer. We are celebrating the Eucharist, we're singing hymns, and we're mostly sitting quietly in our pews. While this way of worship is meaningful to us, this isn't the only expression of who God is or the only way to draw near to the Holy. While we are gathered here, other Christian traditions in our own city are worshiping in their own way, and other religions are showing devotion to God using a different name. And some people aren't in a church building but are communing with nature or with loved ones. I know God in my own particularity, while I'm also part of the vast oneness of God, a God who is all encompassing an eternal, and too holy to ever pin down and doesn't even always need a name to be worshiped.

When the Holy Spirit finally came to the disciples on this exciting day of Pentecost, the Spirit didn't fall on people from every nation of the world to make one homogenized group, there were still different languages, different nations represented. Instead, the Spirit amplified all these diverse voices, all these diverse word choices so they could speak about their own experiences of God's deeds

of power while also being united in the one Spirit of God.

Our psalmist today says, "Manifold are your works," meaning many, diverse and varied. "In wisdom, you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures." And the prophet Joel says, "The Spirit will be poured out on all flesh." He speaks of all genders and those who have power and those who have no power and the way that this will bridge heaven and earth. We haven't even begun to comprehend the many expressions of God's Spirit in this manifold, diverse and varied world that we live in.

I wonder how you might encounter one of the manifold expressions of this wild wind of a Spirit in these days following Pentecost. I wonder what dreams you might have. I wonder what dreams our children might have. I wonder what images and messages and new understandings you might receive about how God's Spirit is moving among us today. I wonder what manifold deeds of God's power you will want to share with others or even with us here at St. James.

Pentecost Sunday invites us to leave space for the movement of God's Spirit in these unexpected ways to not limit how God may meet us in all kinds of people and in all kinds of experiences and all kinds of places in the waking world, and even in our unconscious and our sleep. Pentecost is a reminder that God's Spirit, the essence of who God is, cannot be contained and can't be tamed, and it can't even be given one name in a world with so many different languages. God can't be approached in one definitive way in a world with so many cultures and traditions. And God meets us in our particularity while bringing us together in the one body, in the oneness of God.

May we each have the courage to call on the Lord in the language of our own hearts, to open ourselves to new experiences of God's Spirit. And may we join our voice with the one voice, knowing that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Amen.