

**The Impossible Dream**  
Acts 2:1-21 (June 5, 2022)  
Y. Joe Kim

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. <sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” <sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup> But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.” <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> ‘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. <sup>18</sup> Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. <sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. <sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ (Acts 2:1-21)*

### **1. Four Languages in One Church**

In New York, I served a church that had four language ministries. We had an English, Spanish, Chinese and Korean worship service every Sunday. The church had joint service several times a year during Easter, Pentecost, World Communion Sunday, and Christmas. During one service, we had the scripture reading in Chinese, the prayer in Korean, the choir in English and the sermon in Spanish. Although there were different languages, we felt

God's grace and love in our worship. Have you ever thought about God who can understand every language in our world? Have you ever imagined yourself to communicate with me in Korean language?

## 2. Miracles Happened at Pentecost

Acts chapter 2 tells us that it happened at Pentecost. Pentecost means "the fiftieth day." It is the fiftieth day after Passover. The feast of Pentecost was primarily a thanksgiving for the first fruits of the wheat harvest, but it was later associated with receiving the Ten Commandments.

Why was Pentecost associated with the receiving of the Law? It is because the Israelites received the Ten Commandments 50 days after the exodus of slavery from Egypt. The Ten Commandments are the symbol of God's gift confirming the special relationship of Israel with God as God's chosen people.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost gives Pentecost a new meaning. Pentecost means more than a Jewish festival. It now means an outpouring of the Holy Spirit signaling the birth of the church. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples and followers of Jesus to be witnesses to Christ, transforming the people in the world.

What happened at Pentecost? The disciples gathered with the 120 followers of Jesus in the upper room. They prayed and waited for the promised Holy Spirit. Luke described in verses 2-4, "***suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*** People did not understand why it was happening.

This was the fulfillment of John the Baptist's words about the Holy Spirit's baptizing with fire (Luke 3:16), and of the prophet Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29). Fire symbolizes God's purifying presence, which burns away the undesirable elements of our lives and sets our hearts aflame to ignite the lives of others.

On Mount Sinai, God confirmed with fire from heaven confirming the validity of the Ten Commandments. At Pentecost, God showed his presence and confirmed the validity of the Holy Spirit by sending fire. This does not mean that we can always experience God's presence in such a spectacular way. God may speak to us in "a gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12) just as God spoke to Elijah in a cave.

This passage tells us that an impossible thing happened when the Holy Spirit was poured out to the disciples. At the time, Jews who were living in other nations came to Jerusalem on pilgrimage to celebrate Pentecost. Luke

put a list of 15 different regions from which Jews had come from. The Jews were dispersed throughout the world due to persecution and captivity. Although the disciples never learned different languages, the crowds heard the disciples declaring the wonders of God in their own tongues at Pentecost.

What is the meaning of this impossible event at Pentecost? This impossible event signals that the good news of Jesus Christ is not only for the Jews but for everyone in the world regardless of their nationality or language. No matter our race, color, nationality, or native language, God speaks to us. God wants us to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

When the crowds heard what the disciples were saying in their native languages, they were amazed and perplexed. They asked one another, “**what does this mean?**” They could not understand why something supernatural would take place. Some made fun of the disciples and said, “**They have had too much wine.**” They thought the disciples were drunk.

### 3. Peter’s First Sermon

Peter stood and defended the disciples against the accusation of drunkenness. He says, “**Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>‘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** (verses 15-17). Peter says, no one drinks at 9 in the morning. Instead of being drunk, the disciples were experiencing what was prophesied in Joel chapter 2. The prophecies of Joel quoted in Acts 2:19-20 were not fulfilled at Pentecost. But the implication is that it would be fulfilled in the future.

Peter points out that at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out to men, women, slaves, Jews, and Gentiles. The Holy Spirit can be received by everyone. This was a revolutionary thought for first-century Jews. Peter stresses that when the people are filled with the Holy Spirit, they are empowered to do impossible things. In verses 22-36, Peter presents Jesus as the Messiah fulfilling Psalms 16 and 110. In verses 37-41, he concludes his sermon with a call to repentance and baptism.

Peter was a fisherman without deep formal education. But after he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached like a preacher or a seminary professor. Where did his knowledge of the Old Testament and his spiritual insight come from? It is certainly from the power of the Holy Spirit.

What about the boldness of Peter and other disciples? When Jesus was captured and crucified, all disciples ran away and hid. They were afraid of being captured and suffering like Jesus. However, at Pentecost, Peter and

other disciples became bold, and were not afraid anymore. Such a big change in Peter and other disciples tells us that a transformation happened when the Holy Spirit was poured out to them. The transformation also happened to many other people. Verse 41 says, ***“those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.”*** It was impossible to imagine that so many people would become followers of Jesus after Peter’s first sermon.

#### **4. Greater Works**

In John 14:12, Jesus says to his disciples, ***“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.”*** Jesus did many miracles, but his disciples’ outreach would be greater. How was this possible? It is because Jesus had gone to the Father and had sent the Holy Spirit.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Today is Pentecost Sunday. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out to the disciples. They spoke different languages that they had never learned before so that those who visited Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost were able to understand the mighty works of God.

At Pentecost, Peter and the disciples became bold, and Peter preached his first sermon. When he finished his message, 3,000 people were baptized and became followers of Jesus. The disciples never expected such miracles at Pentecost. But miracles happened and many became followers of Jesus. The coming of the Holy Spirit showed the disciples and us that Christ is still with the disciples and us through the Holy Spirit to continue Jesus’ ministry.

#### **6. Application**

Jesus asked the disciples and us to make disciples not only in Jerusalem but everywhere on earth. We experience that making disciples of Jesus Christ is not easy. However, the Acts of the Apostles tells us that if the Holy Spirit empowers us, nothing is impossible. Do we have any impossible dreams? I wish there was no more mass shooting in the U.S, but everyone is filled with Jesus’ love. I wish the United Methodist Church was not divided but truly united. When people come for the strawberry festival this Saturday, I wish they could feel our Church is their church. It sounds impossible. Right? But when the disciples prayed and waited, miracles happened. What are your impossible dreams? Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit makes those impossible dreams possible. If we believe that the Holy Spirit will empower us, our impossible dreams will come true. Amen.