**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 5-23-2021
Can I Get a Witness?**

I would like to share a true story with you about an American missionary named Bruce Olsen. He wrote a book describing an amazing experience that happened doing his time as a missionary in remote Ecuador. The book is called Bruchko, which is what the people there called him.

Bruce was from Minnesota and at part of a Lutheran Church there when he felt the Lord calling him to take the gospel to a people group in South America that were virtually unknown to those outside of that area.

A few tribes of people lived in that part of Ecuador and they were only recently discovered at that time, a few decades ago, by planes in their exploring for oil.

And one tribe was so hostile and dangerous, that it led the oil people to just stay away. And it was this same tribe that Bruce felt led by the Lord to and to share Jesus with.

Bruce had no visa. He went to stay for 6 weeks and it was the work of God that enabled him to stay longer.

Bruce arrived at this region and thought that he came to this tribe. But it was actually a different tribe. They thought he was coming as an enemy, so they injured him, but after they realized that he was friendly and meant them no harm, they helped nurse him back to health.

Bruce discovered that this tribe was not the one that he felt the Lord calling him to reach. He asked the other tribe about them and they said “They’re our long-time enemies. They will surely kill you.”

But he told them that this was the tribe that God was calling him to go to, so he went.

After arriving at this other tribe, he was not surprisingly bumped around a bit there as well. But wasn’t killed because one of the leaders in this tribe he seemed to find favor with.

And it’s a long story, but eventually there were many conversations, including this leader in this tribe. And they were so filled with the mind of God and the Holy Spirit was powerfully working among them and this tribe felt compelled to go and share the good news of Jesus with the tribe that Bruce had originally come upon when he entered the region.

But Bruce said, ‘*well how can you do that? You don’t even speak their language*.’

But they said, *“I don’t know, but we just feel compelled by the Lord.”*

And an amazing thing happened. When they went there, they just spoke their language, but the listeners heard it perfectly in their language.

The Holy Spirit was somehow responsible for this language conversation. It would be like me speaking English today and people hearing me in perfect Swahili in certain places in Africa, where that is the main language. This was a supernatural sign of God’s presence and God’s powerful hand upon this situation.

And friends, in all likelihood, something very similar to this happened on the Day of Pentecost.

Let us read about this amazing event that happened this time of year nearly 2,000 years ago.

It is found in Acts 2:1-21

**1When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A1-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26954a)**] as the Spirit enabled them.**

**5Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? 8Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A1-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26959b)**] 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” 12Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”**

**13Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”**

**14Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! 16No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:**

**17“‘In the last days, God says,
    I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
    your young men will see visions,
    your old men will dream dreams.
18Even on my servants, both men and women,
    I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
    and they will prophesy.
19I will show wonders in the heavens above
    and signs on the earth below,
    blood and fire and billows of smoke.
20The sun will be turned to darkness
    and the moon to blood
    before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
21And everyone who calls
    on the name of the Lord will be saved.’[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A1-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26971c)**]**

Jesus had instructed his small group of followers, which about 120 people, according to Acts chapter 1, to remain in the city of Jerusalem until He would clothe them with power from on high. Jesus would be sending the Holy Spirit to indwell with the community of believers.

They didn’t know what this would look like. They just opened and trusted that Jesus would make it clear to them when this would happen.

And Jesus did just that on the day of Pentecost. The 120 became strong witnesses for Jesus, and by the end of that event, we are told from the Bible that 3,000 were added to their number.

As much as they walked with Jesus and learned from Jesus, the Lord knew that they needed the power of the Holy Spirit to give them boldness and courage and guidance on how to be good witnesses for Jesus to the world.

And so 10 days had passed following Jesus’ ascension to heaven. They had seen him be lifted up and a cloud eventually hiding their eyes from seeing him.

And so out of obedience, there they were, gathering together and spending much time in prayer together. And on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus pours out the Spirit upon them.

Pentecost has a special Jewish festival where Jewish people from all over came to worship God. It was similar to Passover in that the city was crowded with people that had traveled to the city to celebrate.

And Pentecost was when the Jews were to offer the first fruits of the harvest back to the Lord as worship. And so what a perfect day for the Holy Spirit to be poured out and the first fruit of new believers entering God’s Kingdom take place.

At that time, the most common language in the Roman Empire was Greek. Basically, everybody knew Greek, just as much of the world today can speak English.

So likely, when the phenomena happened with the rushing wind and these tongues as of fire resting on those gathered, they likely began to declare in Greek the wonderful things that the Lord had done for Israel and the world in Jesus Christ.

But these crowds were from all over. And besides knowing Greek, most of the Jews who were gathered knew another language. They were not like monolignal people like me. 😊

And suddenly, these disciples from Galilee begin to be heard in all these different languages at the same time. Again, this was very much like the amazing event described in Brushko.

And again, this supernatural event drew people to the faith. 3,000 were added to their number that day. The church was born! The Spirit of God had been poured out and the evangelism of the world had begun. Truly, the world would never be the same.

As we think about this passage from our Bible and its significance for our lives today, there are a few big takeaways.

**First, Jesus had now been exalted to the Father’s side**. Christ had previously told his followers that He was returning to the Father. The events of that Pentecost Day demonstrated that Jesus was now exalted and glorified. Jesus was back at God the Father’s right hand, raised to the highest place.

And so Paul could write in Philippians chapter 2 verses 8-9 **“And being found in appearance as a man, he bumbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.”**

No one on earth witnessed Jesus’ being exalted to the highest place, but what Jesus did in pouring out the Holy Spirit so powerfully on Pentecost, was a clear sign that this had taken place.

From that day onward, the church was to know that Jesus Christ has been exalted. He was exalted in heaven and is sovereign over heaven and earth. Jesus is King.

And this is as true today as it was then. Jesus is exalted over all! Over all the evils and uncertainties of life, Christ is Lord and we can trust in Him. The apostles could trust in Him, no matter what they would face in life.

**Second, both the early believers in Jesus as well as us today, we all need the Person and Power of God the Holy Spirit in order to be effective witnesses for Jesus in this world**.

In our own strength, we can do nothing, but by the Spirit of God, each of us can be powerful witnesses.

**Third, while the disciples needed to wait for Jesus to pour out the Holy Spirit and empower them to be witnesses, we need only to ask today**. The Spirit has already been poured out upon the earth. Today, we can trust that if we ask Jesus to fill us with His Spirit, He is faithful to do it. But know this, we need to be aware that we are saying, “You are in charge now. And You can use me as You see fit for Your purposes.” – Bruce Olsen was led to Ecuador. The tribe Bruce reached was led to reach out to the other tribe. We can trust that the Holy Spirit will call us to take steps of faith.

**And fourth, those filled with the Spirit were proclaiming the wonders of God**. A life filled with the Spirit of God will lead to a life that proclaims the wonders of God. We do not have to have all the answers to all of life’s questions. But in word and in deed, we will proclaim the wonders of God. And we can trust that God will do great things for us, as He did through the apostles and other earth Christians and as He did through Bruce Olsen.

**And fifth and finally, however long we have been Christians even if we have asked Jesus to fill us with His Holy Spirit, we know from Scripture that the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit on more times than just Pentecost, so if that is you today, if you’ve been a Christian for a while, it is biblical to ask for a fresh touch, a fresh stirring, of the Spirit of God within you**. And our good God will surely answer this prayer as well.

Let us pray…

Sources:

English Bible: Acts – video from lesson 2 – Dr. H. Douglass Buckwalter

The Acts of the Apostles by David G. Peterson