

D Narrative 37, 2018
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Poulsbo
Pastor Alison Shane

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen



Look at the picture on the cover of the bulletin. My first thought as I looked at it was, “Wow! What a great Pentecost picture! The colors of fire, the petals look like tongues AND like hearts on fire! This is fantas... wait a minute. That’s Scotch Broom. Noooooooo!”

Scotch Broom is the bane of my springtime. A few years after we moved here, we signed Ryan up for a t-ball team. Practices and many games were held at Pinecrest Elementary in East Bremerton. I didn’t often go to practice, because Kent was coaching and it was a divide-and-conquer parenting time. But I showed up for Ryan’s first game, excited to watch my kid play this sport that I love. I saw the first inning. By the second inning, my eyes were itching and watering so badly I could no longer see the field. I was stuffed up and sneezing. Lining two sides of the field were thickets of Scotch Broom. “What is THAT?” I asked the other parents. “Oh, that’s Scotch Broom,” they responded. “Pretty, isn’t it? But it’s everywhere. It’s awful.” An invasive species as tenacious as the blackberries.

And a perfect image for Pentecost.

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 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. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”

Peter identifies this event as something the prophet Joel foresaw: “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. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

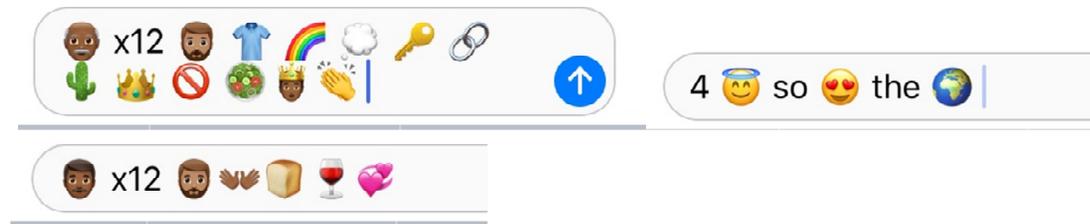
Peter recognized that Pentecost event as a sign of the “last days” before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. And I think he was right. Those things Joel saw indeed happened. Christ’s death was accompanied by darkness during the day, the portents have been happening all along, and the Pentecost event brought all the prophesying about which the prophet prophesied. All the things that heralded the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day happened during those months. Because the culmination, Pentecost, brought in the Lord’s great and glorious day, when God’s presence would be spread throughout the whole earth in the hearts

and on the tongues of all those gathered who heard about Jesus in their own languages, when the church would be established to continue the work of sharing the news of Jesus with the world, making sure each hears in the native language of each. God is out there, proclaiming love and life to the world through the church.

In these recent days, though, sharing God’s story seems to have become a lost art. I think we don’t quite know HOW to speak God’s story in this day and age, with all that progress and technology have brought.

Telling God’s story happens best, takes hold best, in community. Which means we need to first be part of any community in which we hope to share God’s story. And second, we need to learn the language of the community. At Pentecost, the Spirit gave the gathered ones the ability to speak in the languages of their hearers. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he wrote using the language of their culture: the language of love and longing well-known among them.

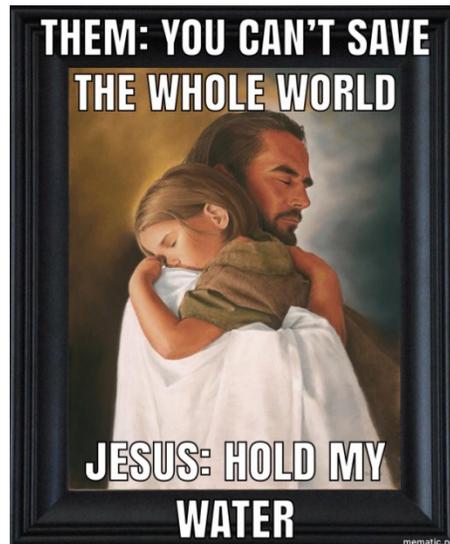
So what is the language in which we need to tell God’s story? Shall we translate Jesus’ love into emoticons?



Should we shorten it to text speak?

- God: Im with u 24/7
- God: ur mine 4vr

Do we speak in memes?



I think the key to telling God’s story in this culture, in this community, among today’s people is to be REAL. That’s kind of one of our cultural buzzwords, isn’t it? Being real. What does it mean? Is it about sharing facts? Is it about truth? Is it about physical, tangible, unless-I-see-I-will-not-believe, reality?

No. Being real just means being genuine. Heartfelt. Tell the story from your heart. This generation will accept the unknown, the other, the higher power, the creator. Unknown does not mean it's not real. Tell the story from your heart, and the "other" becomes real.

In this generation, mystery can be real.

Liturgy can be real.

Pews, and chancel, and stained glass, and chanting can be real.

Being real means being genuine. This experience here in worship can be experienced as real if we are telling God's story through this space and this music and these words from our hearts.

Tell God's story from your heart. Tell God's story in your own story. Why are YOU here? Answers like "because I was raised this way" may or may not fly these days. Why are YOU here? What encounter with God draws you to worship? What experience with God changes your perspective on life? Why are YOU here?

I am here because I believe God loves everyone, and the people here show that love in helping people in any way we can. And I want to be part of that.

I am here because I believe God loves me, and I experience that love in the people here. God gives me hope because these people give me hope.

I am here because I believe God loves everyone, and here I can participate in that love, both in giving and receiving.

Why are YOU here?

That's the story to tell, and when you tell it from your heart, the Spirit will make it heard, each in the language of each. This is the Lord's great and glorious day, as we, the church, tell God's story to the ends of the earth.



Which is why that is such a great image for Pentecost. The church might feel foreign to people, an allergen even, but it is our job to be an invasive, pervasive, persistent, tenacious, gorgeous presence of love in our community, and in God's world, hearts and tongues aflame with the love of God in Jesus.

So off we go to tell the story, God's story, from our hearts. Why are YOU here?