

Introduction: Promises

Jesus made two incredible promises that would forever change our reality. One is found in Luke 11:13

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

The other, **John 7:38-39**

38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Fifty days after Jesus was glorified in the resurrection, the “good gift/living water” promise, personified in the Holy Spirit, was finally kept (“Promises Made-Promises Kept”- He over promises and over delivers). Acts 2:1-4 tells us what happened:

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Awesome God

How many do you know that God’s mantra is, “Go big or go home!” The expanse of our ever-expanding universe is case in point! When Jesus sent the Spirit to empower his church he did so in cataclysmic fashion. While up in the Upper Room (get it?), 120 of his closest followers hear a rushing mighty wind and see tongues of fire that burn but do not consume. These physical disturbances are reminiscent of other “visits” of God. (1) At Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:17-18):

17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently

And (2) in the Temple the year King Uzziah died. The prophet Isaiah reports (Isaiah 6:4-7)

4 At the sound of seraphim voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

Tongues of Fire

At Pentecost, however, there's an added individual dynamic. Each of the 120 receives the gift of the Holy Spirit when what seemed to be “tongues of fire” hover over them. We already saw that fire imagery at Sinai and when the seraphim placed a live coal on Isaiah's mouth to remove his guilt. John the Baptist promised that Jesus would baptize his Church with the “Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11). But what does the fire symbolize? It generally represents purity, passion, and purging.

On Glossa

One reason why the Holy Spirit descended upon the church was to empower each of its members to speak in tongues. Before we get into the nature of this miracle, let me point out that the word for tongue here is from the Greek “glossa” which means, “language, dialect, or speech” (glossary). Paul in places like I Corinthians 14:2, said glossa was one of “Gifts of the Spirit” called “ecstatic utterances.” If employed in public worship however, this kind of glossa must be accompanied by an interpreter. He referred to another use of glossa when referencing his personal prayer life. In I Corinthians 14:18 he boasted, “I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all.” This glossa, which only God understands, matches up with **Romans 8:26-27**:

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

The Missional Tongue

Some say the gift of glossa ended with the apostolic era while the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements claim it is valid today. We are not here this morning to solve this theological debate, only to hold that all the gifts of God are necessary to carry out the mission of God. Which leads us to the type of glossa that enabled the 120 to do a miraculous thing in **Acts 2:5-13**:

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia 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!”

Here, the 120 were empowered to speak in what I call the “missional tongue” I define this form of glossa as:

**The supernatural ability to speak languages not previously known or studied
to overcome language barriers to the Great Commission.**

Fifteen different languages are mentioned in this text alone which tells us that God wants to save his world so much, through the Gospel of Jesus, that he will, whenever necessary, enable his people with miraculous “lingua franca” abilities so that everyone gets a chance to hear it. Indeed, overseas missionaries have testified that this missional tongue enabled them to converse, surprisingly so, with people of different languages. However, the gift of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost was not so much about speaking in tongues but more about what the Church of Jesus Christ is: a Spirit empowered missional community.

Conclusion: Invitational Community

Do we all need to speak in tongues to build a Spirit empowered missional community? Perhaps not, but as Paul said, “eagerly desire all the gifts” of which glossa is one many (I Corinthians 14:1).

I encourage you to open your hearts, pray about it and see what happens.

Regardless, if you happen to do so or not, our practical takeaway this morning is to rely on the Spirit's power to enable us to build an invitational community at Bay Point.

I read an article this past week that listed four major reasons why Christians have difficulty inviting people to Christ and his church:

- 1) Fear of rejection.
- 2) Fear of not knowing what to say.
- 3) Fear of starting spiritual conversation
- 4) Fear of not knowing how to respond to questions/objections.

That's a whole lot of fear!

Although we need to do a lot more equipping, empowering, and encouragement in this area, I guarantee that when we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, He will replace our fears with a whole-lotta-boldness.