

At Pentecost, we celebrate the Holy Spirit gifting us to hear the gospel whatever our language. Rather than uniformity and sameness, diversity is celebrated — diversity of language and culture and people. This is one of the glorious things of God’s creation – the diversity of people, personalities, talents, even food. God isn’t into sameness.

I love these trifolds. These are different kinds of butterflies. And just of Southern CA. The world knows an even greater variety. The same with birds, flowers, trees. God’s obviously into diversity and hopes we are too.

How glorious today to hear Psalm 104 vs. 30 in lots of languages: *Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.* And we hear from Acts 2 of the Spirit assisting people to hear the gospel in their own language. It’s not about making us all speak one language but honoring diversity.

Even the First Reading Dan read from Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel, names God’s delight in diversity. This ancient story isn’t ancient at all in its import, though it hasn’t always been heard for the good news it is.

The Tower of Babel story isn’t about confusing people with different languages. Babel isn’t about babbling but relates to the location Babylon. The story shows God’s passion about preventing one language, one nation, one people from dominating others.

This year as much as any this story has renewed importance. Hear again its point: *“Now the whole earth had one language **and the same words** ... The people said to each other, “Let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves...”*

Then the story lets us know God is watching. God cares about what goes on among humans. And God doesn’t like what God sees. “Look, they are trying to make a name for themselves as one people, with one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do.”

The desire expressed in the building of this tower is self-centeredness. It’s for those who looked and spoke like them. But God isn’t impressed and says, “Let’s nip this in the bud.” The Tower of Babel story is a rejection of oligarchy, totalitarianism.

Those of one language who want to make a name for themselves are essentially rejecting the command in Genesis 1 to fill the earth and care for it. Their interest is themselves alone and God won't have it.

God intervenes in Genesis 11 challenging isolationism. God hadn't created humankind to just take care of ourselves and those who look and sound like us. We're to care for each other and all creation. God isn't into tower-building for a like-minded few.

God is deeply into diversity, complexity, variety – like the likes of you! Look at you. Different sizes, opinions, histories, tastes in food, in sports, in hobbies, in colors. Color is clearly something God is into. Flowers, butterflies, people tell us that. God has no favorite but adores them all.

In today's Acts reading we hear how God helps all the languages in their known world be languages of meaning – languages through which people hear the call and love of God.

In Acts 2 Dan read, *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.* In verse 8 they ask, *How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?*

They can hear because God knows all the languages. We have a multi-lingual God. Of course we do. As we say in our Creeds, *I believe in God, creator of heaven and earth.* Our Creator delights in all God has made and sends us out not to make others be like us, but to support each other in each being our best selves.

ELCA Bishop Kevin Strickland has on his Facebook a rainbow with the post, *The only choice I made was to be myself.* This is what LCM is into too, being a church where we choose to be who we are by the call of God – a community where all are welcome, where diversity is celebrated, where we don't build for ourselves alone or for any one group.

The last two Sundays volunteers from among us – about 12 of you over the two weeks – worked to prepare an updated Statement of Welcome from LCM as a Reconciling in Christ congregation. The Draft will be brought to our June Church Council meeting for review and approval. It's a working document. This is the proposal so far.

“Lutheran Church of the Master welcomes you just as you are. We are an open and affirming congregation that welcomes all people of every race, culture, ethnicity, age, gender expression or identity, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, socioeconomic position, family status, background, or where you are in your journey of faith. LCM invites you to join us in our work of anti-racism, inclusivity, and social, economic, and environmental justice.”

That’s a statement to live up to. And we are strengthened by Word and Sacrament for just such a life. And we be about this if we allow ourselves to be empowered by the Holy Spirit Jesus sends upon us.

In today’s John 14 reading Jesus says, *‘Very truly, I tell you, to believe in me is to do the works I do and, in fact, greater works because I send you the Holy Spirit, the Advocate.’*

We’ve been promised Jesus’ own Spirit. It’s this Spirit who empowers us, who advocates among us for the very things our Welcome Statement wants to say. May we breathe in and go forth in the power of this Spirit.

Amen.

+Pastor Peg Schultz-Akerson, *Come, Holy Spirit, come!*
Lutheran Church of the Master, Los Angeles