

5/23/2010

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Lord God, on this day centuries ago, You sent Your Spirit to open the eyes and hearts of humanity. The Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel, enlightened us with His gifts, sanctified us, and continues to keep us in the true faith. Lead us by Your Spirit, as we bear witness to the wonders of Holy Scripture and our own lives; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Genesis 11:1-9

(God's people, consumed by their egos, build a tower to the heavens. God confuses their language so they are no longer able to work together.)

1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.

4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." 5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.

6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." 8 So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

9 That is why it was called Babel--because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

THE SECOND LESSON Acts 2:1-21

(The God who confused the people in their arrogance is the One who has mercy on them and speaks His love into their lives into their own language---no matter what it is.)

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. A miracle**

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!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Confusion for others

14 Then 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. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

a God promised Event

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. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. **21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** *faith in action*

THE GOSPEL LESSON John 14:23-31

(Jesus promises to send the Spirit to remind us of God's teachings and guide us in our witness.)

23 Jesus replied, "**If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.** My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. 25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 **But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.** 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. 28 "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. 30 I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, 31 **but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.** "Come now; let us leave.

INTRO - While we were out of town we visited Boston. In fact, we went to a specific place in Boston, Fenway Park, to see a Red Sox baseball game. Having been born in MA I've tried to go to a game many times in my life, but I've only been there once, 27 years ago. And that time we left a restaurant an hour and a half early, and finally made it to the game an hour late. So, this time we asked directions and got them from many people, only everyone had different directions. Hmm! One of those giving directions was a friend who was going to meet us at the game, so we tried to follow her directions. "Get off at Allston. Turn right and right again into Boston University. You'll see the parking garages." We got off. We turned right, and right again. No Boston University, no parking garages. (Later she told us those directions weren't quite right.) The map we had was a big atlas, and the city map of Boston was inadequate. I was confused, frustrated, possibly going further from our destination, and somewhat lost.

I. God has a destination for us - heaven! He has away for us to get there. We reach heaven by God's grace through faith and trust in Jesus as our Savior, and that faith leads to lives of obedience and service.

But, even though we know our destination, and even though we know God's directions, in this world we often get confused and lost.

A. We see that confusion in the lives of the people in Jerusalem in our Bible reading.

1. They were present in the holy city to worship God as Jews, people who were actually awaiting the Messiah. Their hope was living in the eternal kingdom of God as His children. But, because they didn't know or believe that Jesus the Son of God had come as Messiah, they lost their directions on their road to their goal.

2. And, even when God acted powerfully in their midst, they were confused, wondering at the powerful sound of the rushing wind and the speaking of the disciples in different languages.

3. These Jewish followers of God were lost and confused. Look at verses 6, 6, and 12.

B. When was the last time life had you confused? You weren't sure where you were going or how to get there. Or, maybe a better question, when is the last time you WEREN'T confused?

1. Do you always understand how to deal with the challenges of life?

2. Do you always understand what God wants you to do?

3. Are you unsure about where God has you headed?

II. Knowing our confusion on our journey to the destination God has for us, He has acted powerfully to help and guide us. He has sent His Holy Spirit.

A. First, God acted powerfully in Jesus. The love and power of God has done everything we need.

1. In amazing love God worked forgiveness for us on the cross.

2. In wonderful power God won victory for us in the grave.

3. God has our destination ready and waiting, and calls us to believe in

B. Secondly, God direction to the disciples who had so often gone wrong. God also gave direction to the confused people in Jerusalem through the Spirit.

1. Look at verse 4. **4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.** First, God worked through His Holy Spirit to guide often confused disciple to speak to the confused masses.

2. Look at verse 14. Peter says, "**Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.**" By the Spirit God gave explanation, knowledge, and understanding for confusion.

3. Finally, look at verse 21 **And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** Not only did God give direction to the disciples, and work to give direction to the confused people in Jerusalem, but finally He led them through understanding and

faith toward their final destination.

A. Did you know that on that first Pentecost day 3000 believed and were baptized and saved by God's grace, through the working of the Spirit.

B. So God by the Holy Spirit God gave direction in the midst of confusion, and led people toward the final destination of heaven.

C. God does the same for us today, even when confused.

1. John 14:26 says, **26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.** He teaches confused people and reminds them and points them to Jesus, our Savior.

2. God works powerfully by His Spirit to create faith, and bring us to eternal life.

3. Often we don't sense the power, but in Baptism, in His Word, in fulfilling His promises, God is faithfully and powerfully working in us today.

4. The Holy Spirit can be the mighty rushing wind, or the still small voice

III. There are some practical lessons for us to learn from our story.

A. First, by trying to navigate by my intuition in Boston I was getting more lost. One lesson to learn from today's account from God's Word is humility. We shouldn't be surprised when we are confused. We are sinful people in a sinful world trying to follow a holy God.

1. In 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, we are told in verse 12 **Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.**

2. Humility is a good way to face our confusion. We won't always understand everything and should not expect to understand. After all God and his ways are a mystery higher than our understanding.

B. Secondly, worship and study are helpful in giving us wisdom and knowledge.

1. Remember, John says about the Spirit, **will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**

2. But, if you don't plant the seeds the plants don't grow.

3. If God's Word isn't in your life, how can it grow and give you understanding and knowledge.

4. A humble way to trust God's Spirit is to worship and study and let Him bring understanding for our confusion.

C. Finally, because we trust God, His people act in bold obedience and service.

1. Peter and the other disciples were not trained speakers. But they were trusting God to act through them, in spite of their own sin and failure. They spoke to a large crowd.

2. God wants us to be saved. He wants *all* to call on His name and be saved. In that list of people in Jerusalem were even Babylonians (or Iraqis), and Arabs, and Romans, and Egyptians.

3. God calls us to listen to His direction, and to act, trusting Him to work through us, rather than trusting ourselves and our knowledge.

4. In other words He teaches and strengthen us so we share His love with others.

CONCLUSION - We got off at the Allston exit in Boston, and I kept trying to feel my way there, looking for a tall parking garage, looking for signs. I was getting lost and frustrated. Kathy was frustrated. On our own we were doing nothing. But, I had a tool I hadn't used much. My new I-phone has a GPS. We had used it, but not much, and didn't trust it very well. Kathy entered Fenway Park into the GPS and it started talking. It wasn't long before we saw the park at the end of a street, and a sign for garage parking. We trusted our help, and it got us through our confusion to our destination. God has acted powerfully and lovingly in Jesus to save us. He has given us His Spirit to

guide us home. Trust Him to work in your life. Work for Him, trusting His guidance.