



## Pentecost

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Acts 2:1-21; John 14:8-17

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Pentecost is here, 50 days after Easter. Each Sunday since Easter we've heard stories of characters in the fledgling community of the Way. We've heard of spirit outpouring on Saul, on Gentiles and prison guard families, restoring new life to the faithful and, perhaps less benevolently, Paul in a funk driving out a spirit of divination. But not until today do we hear of the Spirit outpouring upon the disciples gathered together.

Of course today's reading takes place **before** all the other ones. It **begins** the telling of the Acts of the Apostles, as if to remind us that all the stories of transformation we've heard flow from this bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

The religious space the disciples inhabited after Jesus death made them vulnerable. Gathered together, on this day, the Holy Spirit pours out upon them. On a day when Jews from all over the inhabited world were gathered in Jerusalem the disciples were given ability to speak in other languages, the languages of those gathered.

The words "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability" stuck with me this year. We use language to connect and communicate. Yet language is subtle and nuanced, we weave language together in different forms, we use it to tell stories, to story our lives. It may seem we tell stories less now than in the past. Digital literacy uses

less words, more images and short sound bite videos. Even so in this language stories are told, we story ourselves. Some of it an honest portrayal, some perhaps the story we'd **prefer** to inhabit.

Our stories speak the language of our life experience. When we meet someone with a vastly different story to ours, even if we share a language, it can seem impossible to relate, to imagine their world, yet are we so disconnected?

Let me share some stories: I was part of a working bee at HomeGround, alongside new residents planting the new rooftop garden. This included sharing kai and conversation. I had chance to talk a bit with some of the new residents. The shift from street or tenancy to owning an apartment was a process being negotiated. Although appreciative, adjusting was going to take time. On the wall of the dining room are pinned two maps of NZ and the world. New residents are invited to place a pin to mark where they come from. I asked the resident I was talking with whether they'd done this yet. "No," was the response, but they wanted to. So we went across to the maps, taking a pin to place. Another resident, who'd been there a bit longer and was more settled, was leaning on the wall by the map. Breaking out in te reo, the newer resident I was with, was asked where they belonged. It transpires they come from the same place, they know each other's whanau. A conversation burst forth along with smiles and hand slaps.

A little later that week, while attending the City Centre Network meeting, a person from the Aaiotanga Centre told of the time they'd drawn a chalk carpet across the pavement to their entrance. Overnight it was neatly cleaned away by the street sweeper. They redrew it. The following morning they arrived to be greeted by a streetie who proudly shared he'd been there from 5.30am to make sure it wasn't cleaned away again. From this a relationship of stories shared ensued. The city seen through different eyes

revealed. One day the teller of this story asked the streetie, “I’ve always wondered why Aotea Square never flourishes as a community space.” He responded “Because it’s built over a carpark, it isn’t connected to the land, it isn’t grounded nothing can grow there.”

And one more, the cross recently stolen from St Matthew’s has been here for 99 years. Only since being stolen have we’ve learned its story. On 8 May 1924 the NZ Herald reports, ‘A memorial cross - “a thank offering from those who received health and blessing” at the mission of healing conducted by Mr J M. Hickson in Auckland – was dedicated in St Matthew’s Church last evening by Bishop Averill. The cross is brass and is placed upon the altar.

There were memories in men’s lives which would never be effaced, memories which the passage of time only made more familiar until they became a part of life itself. Such was the effect of the healing mission in the lives of many in Auckland. The heavens had been opened and the nearness of the living God revealed.

In that church, for ever hallowed to so many on account of their memorable experience during the mission of healing, they were met to dedicate and erect in the very highest place of honour a permanent memorial of the spiritual experience vouchsafed to them. St Matthew’s in that time had been a veritable Mount of Transfiguration. “Let us remember” concluded the bishop “what prayer and faith did for us then and, if then, why not now and always? May this cross remind us constantly of what the mission meant. What we saw was the real and the true.”

It’s not good the cross was stolen. We’d still prefer it to be returned but **until** it was taken we didn’t know the story behind it, didn’t appreciate the experience it symbolised for those who had it made.

Each of these stories is different, disconnected from the other, in all likelihood different to ours. Yet I’d guess each stirs something in us,

engenders a response, a trigger or link to our own story. They remind, reconnect and reveal to us wisdom.

So what of this and Pentecost? Peter uses the words of the prophet Joel to legitimize what's happening. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, **everyone's** included in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of the living God loosens people and wisdom abounds. This is a **radical** inclusion. Not the 'from our benevolence of being inclusive we'll let you in' inclusion.

Do you think this moment of Pentecost, this experience of outpouring spirit, was a new thing? That until this time no such thing had happened before? Or could it be a veil-torn-away moment of revelation? Heart, mind and spirit are opened to see the way things are, to see our fundamental interconnection. This unnerves us. It challenges our individualism, it upends our assumption we can construct a life without regard for people or planet around us.

What does Pentecost lay upon us? Not only the gift of knowing **we're** filled with a spirit of wisdom that desires and draws us to one another in reconciliation, for the good and for life. But also that this gift is given to each and every one of us and, I'd contend, to every living part of creation. We, therefore, are called to listen, to have ears willing to hear, eyes and hearts open to discern what we ourselves do not have the language to speak. For all are included and all are needed. Each language has its role to speak and to reveal some part of divine indwelling even, perhaps particularly, those whose voices discomfort us and we'd prefer not to hear.