

Nine O Clock In The Morning

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[0 : 00] I'll just pray as we begin then. Father, we come from the busyness of the day.

And we know that what we have read, we call the Word of God. And it seems to be the chosen means by which you want to communicate to our hearts.

And we can't believe that you didn't speak very eloquently to us. We can believe that we are deaf and hard of hearing.

And occupied and preoccupied with things. So our God, grant that in this brief time we have together in the middle of the week, that we may indeed hear you.

As we bend our hearts and our minds over your Word. We ask this in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

[1 : 19] The title is 9 o'clock in the morning and the reason is not contained in the passage that was read for you.

The follow-up to the passage that was read for you is that when all these different people heard in their own language, they wondered and were amazed.

And it says this of them. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, what does this mean? Some, however, made fun of them and said, they have had too much wine. And then Peter stood up in the, what is the beginning to the famous Pentecost sermon, and began it by saying, fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you carefully.

These men are not drunk. As you suppose, it's only 9 o'clock in the morning. And there is running through the whole of the New Testament a kind of vague awareness that what happens to you when you drink and what happens to you when you're filled with the Holy Spirit are comparable experiences.

[3 : 00] And you must know that a pub is a place where people talk. And in order to get them talking, there is lubrication available.

And when the effect of that is such that the conversation ceases to have any meaning is a difficult line to draw.

obviously, people do open themselves up. You know, the typical picture of the fellow at the bar saying to the bartender, my wife doesn't understand me.

Well, he's obviously looking for somebody to talk to. And maybe you're all different, but I come from a world...

I mean, I... one bright young guy that I was talking to years ago about who was an alcoholic and a stockbroker and his family and everything were on the verge of collapsing.

[4 : 03] And he says, do you expect me to do business swilling coffee? And that was that was very eloquent. I mean, he just thought it was totally ridiculous even to consider that possibility.

So, I found... I've always found it very helpful because certainly a lot of people improve a little with some alcohol in them. And now, I suspect that's a very short-term improvement and that it's not worth building anything on, but it it does happen.

So, that's where Paul starts in trying to explain what has taken place. Now, in fact, what has taken place is one of the sort of basic one of the decisive moments in the history of the New Testament. Jesus' personal ministry following John the Baptist's preparatory ministry his personal ministry of teaching and healing and arguing his personal commitment to the powers that be which led to his scourging, his trial, scourging, crucifixion, then his death and burial, then his resurrection and ascension.

that all is prologue to the event which is described today when a whole new reality comes into place.

[5 : 50] And that reality is described for us in the New Testament and it's it's the opening to it is and the passage we read comes from the Acts of the Apostles which John Stott says would be better

entitled the continuing words and works of Jesus by his spirit through the Apostles.

So here is a major transition from the ministry of Jesus directly to the ministry of Jesus by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles.

and so it's a very it's a very important moment and of course it's fundamental to the reality of the church.

Richard Lovelace talks about the church and he says that the Catholic churches tend to be very strong on the fatherhood of God the one who is in overall control and not by that I mean all the different Catholic churches the Protestant churches are very strong on the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross for our redemption and the Pentecostal churches are very strong on the moving and work of the Holy Spirit and that's not unlike the kind of secular division in our world where people want to be concerned for the creation other people feel that there is the emancipation of the human being and other people think that there is a great universal spirit of brotherhood which needs to be harnessed so you have a kind of secular reflection of

God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and obviously the need is that the church needs to bring the Catholic and the Protestant and the Pentecostal elements together as they appear to be here in the same way that the world needs to get its act together in another way so what happens here is that you get three things happening that's a cloud and I don't know how else to represent wind but there are three pictures in this passage that's fire and I don't know how else to do this either that's a telephone that's tongues and that those are the three powerful pictures that are put in front of you as being in a sense the marks that were given at this moment in the history of the church to describe what was going to happen in the church or what was happening to the ministry of Jesus from this point on that power would be given which was symbolized by the wind a purifying force would take place which was symbolized by fire and communication would be established which was symbolized by tongues and those are the three things that are spoken of and you can look at them in the passage that was read for us today so that wind is the demonstration you remember how in

[9 : 50] John it talks about you can't tell where it comes from or where it goes to and John says in the third chapter so is everyone that is possessed by the Holy Spirit there's a power at work which people can't easily identify and it is that power which is the work of the Holy Spirit and you know that you get that wonderful story of Jesus on the sea at night the sea of Galilee when the great storm comes up and Jesus commands it to be still and the disciples say even the wind and the storm obeys him somehow Jesus is Lord and the demonstration of his power is his power over the wind that he is in a sense in control and

John the Baptist had said about Jesus that he baptized with water but there comes one who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit with the wind the holy wind and with fire and so you get you get this is a very powerful picture of the church but it's power that comes from an unidentified source as it were and it's not one over which we are in control but one which we're aware of then when you come to fire you recognize and the tragic headlines of this week underline that fire has terrible destructive power and there is the fire of judgment the lake of fire all those things are biblical pictures of a terribly destructive power

T.S. Eliot said that the choice for human beings is the fire or the fire the fire of judgment or the fire of the Holy Spirit that there was just no there was nothing in between one fire which gives life and one fire which destroys and the effect of fire as it's spoken of in the New Testament is that it is a constantly purifying force and you get that when you have the picture in Isaiah of the seraph the angel coming with a live coal taken with tongs and touching the tongue of Isaiah and saying your guilt is taken away and your sins are atoned and Peter saying your faith which is much more precious than silver or gold will be tested by fire and so you have these two powerful elements which are the basis or the picture of how the community the apostolic community is going to operate in the world in which it lives it's going to operate by wind and by fire and the wind is empowering it and the fire is sanctifying healing and purifying it so that again

Paul says in Romans I beseech you you present your bodies a living sacrifice that there is that saying that some people sometimes use it's better to burn out than wear out and the sense that your life is to be a flame in the sense that there is a constant process of purification going on in your life and that was what was fundamental to the church but having dealt with those two things then Luke goes on to tell us about tongues and it's a remarkable statement because he puts most of his emphasis on that when he says to them that he gives that sort of catalog of where people have

come from

Parthians Medes Elamites it would be nice of you to take a Bible with all those geographical references in the back of it and to trace it and you would go right from Iran through Iraq all through the Mesopotamia and all through the Middle East north through Greece over to Rome south through Cairo and Egypt and Alexandria over to Cyrene and Libya so in a sense it was a whole known world and the New Testament constantly does that it talks about the whole world as being the purpose for which Christ came and that this communication was something that the whole world understood people from every language now I tell you that because again I'm I'm concerned that you recognize that somehow this picture of wind and fire and communication is the picture which is given at the very beginning of the life of the apostolic community which is the continuing words and works of Jesus

[16:10] Christ through the apostles by the Holy Spirit that that's what is happening that's how the church is meant to work work now if you if you if you look at that then what what I think you need to to understand is that somehow part of the vision of the New Testament with regard to the gospel of Jesus Christ is that the whole world will one day hear it that that somehow at some point in history people from every culture and from every language will be able to speak in a way that they can understand each other we understand now

I mean because we are now a global village we understand water and sewage and famine and children and human rights and perhaps music I don't know I listened to a CBC program that was bringing jazz from all around the world there are certain kind of basic communications that human beings have one with another throughout the world but the language by which we come to some agreement the language of human rights as you know in Russia is often interpreted as the language of liberal infiltration into their society that corrodes it so that that language isn't agreed on and the whole business of how we talk to one another is one of the fundamental and primary problems of the whole of the human race

I went yesterday to Templeton high school to talk to a grade 12 11 and 12 class about Christian marriage and there they were oh talk about you know I mean feeling as though you had nothing the dark haired girls came up to me and I wore my dark dog collar and they said hello father and I gave up believing in celibate priesthood at that very moment but I mean the the business of communicating with them was remarkably difficult and I thought I was very clear and very rational and so on but I was obviously as though I'd arrived from Mars as far as they were concerned and it was a fascinating experience but very difficult to know how you could communicate and of course that how does a father communicate with his son how does a husband communicate with his wife or a wife with her husband how do neighbors communicate with each other it's an enormous problem and the the power and influence of the miracle that is spoken of here has I think to be understood when they said everybody heard in their own native language their own original tongue they're the most basic language that they knew they heard these people praising and worshiping God and then I look at the religious world that we live in I'm very much aware that we have enormous problems of communication information we can fill this room with it in an afternoon but communication is we're really lost I read in the Atlantic Monthly that article which is called Dan Quayle was right I don't know if you've seen it it's a fascinating article they talk about a bumper sticker there now talk about language differences you know there is a focus on the family which is a very important I think Christian attempt to put foundations under family life in North America but the bumper sticker says traditional family values this is on the bumper sticker abuse alcoholism and incest and that that kind of malevolent and aggressive attack upon a language which most well I don't know whether most people do

I had a thought most people understood that it's completely undermined by that kind of thinking Patrick Moynihan says it's an effort to accommodate higher levels of social deviance that has language problems itself but the whole picture is of the breakdown of communication in our society so that we just have no language left because we don't know how to talk across the lines of male female we don't know how to talk across the lines of homosexual heterosexual we don't know how to talk across the generation gap all those things seem to be the fundamental problem of communicating in our society and so that what the church is seen as what this community of [22:32] Christ's people is seen as is a community that is empowered by the Holy Spirit it's a community that is sanctified or made holy by the Holy Spirit it's a community that is enabled to communicate one with another by the Holy Spirit and that that that's the function and that the that

the fundamental sort of reality of it is that this is Jesus continued ministry it's not it's his ministry by the Holy Spirit through the apostolic community which is the church and that creates enormous communication problems in the church and enormous communication problems in terms of how the Catholics talk to the Protestants and the Protestants talk to the Pentecostals and the Bethesians those kinds of things and the and the necessity of that that community which is Jesus at work amongst us speaking to us as a community through the ministry of the Holy Spirit by the apostles the church is the church is very divided about this some of the church I mean lots of people who in the name of Christianity say they are being led by the spirit would say that we are not meant to be taught by the word we're only meant to be led by the spirit and other people that get into the position I'm in or considered to be in at least I hope I'm not but is that I spend all my time teaching by the word and not in a sense being obedient to the spirit and that the reality of Christ's presence among us in the community of Christ's church is his empowerment which is the mighty rushing wind his purifying fire which is cleansing us because we need cleansing and his making it possible for us to talk across the barriers that you know we think it a great thing to have translated the gospel into the language of some tribe in New Guinea which is important and I not but how do I talk to you is also a fundamental problem apart from the ministry of Jesus by the Holy Spirit through the community of Christ's people enabling us to talk to one another and to hear one another and how we submit to that and how that happens is an unfolding miracle in our society and a miracle that we have to live in touch with all the time in that community because otherwise we are powerless we are perverse and we are uncommunicative and fragmented by our inability to communicate and

Jesus says he wants a community of people who are empowered who are purified and who by love and I think this is I mean this is what you're going to hear about next week in a very dramatic world situation in Africa a community that is empowered by love to communicate one with another a love which has its source in the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ by word and work through the Holy Spirit by the apostles let me pray father thank you for the picture of the community by which the work of Jesus is to be carried on among us we're so often in our arrogance anxious to take over what we think he should be doing and isn't getting around to and doing it in our own strength and in our own wisdom help us as the early disciples did to wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit to experience the purifying of the fire of the Holy Spirit the purifying of our faith and by that same Holy Spirit the enabling to communicate across all the barriers that divide our world and our personal lives we ask this in Jesus Christ's name Amen