

Pentecost

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[0:00] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Please be seated.

Amen.

Even the languages of those nations who were once enemies of Israel, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, which was the center of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, those who brought Egypt into captivity, were spoken by the disciples.

This reality speaks of the promise in Isaiah that Israel's enemies would turn away from their false gods and violence towards God's people, that they will acknowledge and worship our Lord as the true God.

This alone should provoke wonder and praise at the mysterious works of God, who can turn even our most evil enemies into friends, united together in the family of God.

[1:28] The age of hatred towards God is coming to an end, as is presented to us in the Feast of Pentecost. Hallelujah. As with most truths that we learn from the Holy Scriptures, the events of Pentecost have a depth of truth that reaches beyond the event itself.

Pentecost teaches us about our identity. In our world today, there has been an explosion of interest in who we are, both as a society and as individuals.

And if we think about it for a moment, the question of who we are is one of the most profound questions that we can ask about ourselves. Our culture has attempted in many ways to categorize and define people based on sexual and gender identity, religious and political affiliation, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.

Based on how we are identified in these categories, it is often believed we can understand ourselves and work towards flourishing in our lives. Many will even say that we get to choose how we define ourselves, that we create for ourselves the meaning that we are supposed to impart in this world.

Believe it or not, this is not the first time that a culture has decided to search on its own, search out its own identity. We might think that we are original or clever, but the book of Genesis teaches us something important about a people who tried to make an identity for themselves.

[2:58] In the 11th chapter of the book of Genesis, we read about how the peoples of the whole world had one language. When these people found a place to dwell, we read that they started building bricks in order to make for themselves a city.

Come, let us build ourselves a city, a tower whose top is in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

Because of this, they were punished by God. He confused their languages, and they were scattered over the face of the entire earth. What they were supposed to do with one language and with one voice was worship God.

But instead, they chose to identify themselves in a completely different way, through their own works, apart from the image that was given to them by God. In their attempt to reach the heavens and proclaim their own name to God, in his mercy, he prevents them from uttering their blasphemy by confusing their languages so they cannot speak in one voice.

Pentecost, as we shall see in a moment, is the reversal of the episode that happened at Babel. Those at Babel saw a unity in their identity, the name that they were attempting to make for

themselves.

[4:15] And while unity is important, as Jesus' prayer to the Father in St. John chapter 17 makes quite clear, unity that is not found in being identified with God in Christ is not a unity that is worth having.

Even the Israelites, who were disobedient through much of Old Testament history towards God, believed that having their identity in God was something to be proud of. The Jewish feast of Pentecost was celebrated 50 days after the celebration of Passover, and they commemorated God's giving of the covenant to Abraham and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai.

They commemorated these things because the covenant and the giving of the law speak of their identity, that their lives and names are found in God. Their identity is secure when it is found in him, not in the names that they create for themselves.

What the people undid at Babel, God restored through the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ at Pentecost. The languages of the people were confused at Babel in order to stop their unrighteousness.

And at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave the Galileans the many languages that the surrounding people spoke. This was done in order to bring back people to unity and back to one identity.

[5:39] Not the identity that they cultivated for themselves, but rather the unity that is found between Jesus and his Father. And this is exactly what our Lord says to the apostles in our Gospel text.

Jesus says, Friends, this is what it means to have an identity.

Just as the people of Israel were the sons and daughters of Abraham, so we are the spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham. We are one people of God, bound together in a covenant of love that has been ratified by the blood of Christ on the cross.

We have no need to seek any other identity than that. Now the realities of our physical embodiment, our economic situations, our place on the hierarchies of power in our culture, our ethnicity, and whatever other things that separate us on this earth are real.

It would be foolish, if not impossible, to say that those things in our lives play no role at what happens to us or how we see ourselves in this world. But in the grand scheme of things, those things will not matter when our Lord returns.

[7:47] For as the apostle Paul tells us, For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Christ is our true redeemer. Christ is our true king and Christ. He is our true identity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Yes. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[8:47] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.