

Pentecost 2026
“What God Has to Say”
Numbers 11:24-30, Acts 2:1-21
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There’s a beautiful song by Chris Tomlin that our band has led us in singing called “Indescribable.” I think the last time we sang it was on Creation Care Sunday. Some of the lyrics are, “indescribable, uncontainable, you placed the stars in the sky, and you call them by name, you are amazing God... all-powerful, untamable, awestruck we fall to our knees, and humbly proclaim, you are amazing God.” I think that song does a pretty good job of trying to describe an indescribably wonderful God, and it makes me think about what words or phrases I would use to describe God.

I think, first and foremost, I would describe God as love just like the Bible does in I John 4:16. From there, I would probably go to my next two favorite adjectives which are good and faithful, and then maybe I would say full of grace, and full of mercy and truth. Those aren’t *all* the adjectives that could be used to describe God, but those are all good adjectives, and I feel confident in using them to describe God because Jesus is all those things, and, as we are told in the book of Colossians, Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In other words, if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

Another way to think about that idea is to say that Jesus, who is called the *Word* of God in John’s Gospel, is the *language* that God speaks so that we can know who God is, and what God does, and what God wants. One pastor and theologian that I follow says it this way. *Jesus is what God has to say.*

I love this! The revelation of God in Christ is one of the most glorious facets of the good news. The indescribable, untamable, all-

powerful God wants to be known! Humans have always been reaching up and reaching out looking for the God that we cannot see. We look around at the beauty of the earth and the wonder of creation. We feel human emotions like love, and these things seem like evidence of Someone or something. Like Paul says in Romans 1, “[e]ver since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.” We have an idea that God is there, but we can’t quite put all the pieces together or figure out the mystery, but then God spoke in the clearest language of all, by becoming human and living among us.

I was thinking about this idea that Jesus is the language God uses to reveal himself to us because today is Pentecost, and there were a lot of languages that were spoken on that day when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles. It was the miracle of Pentecost! These men from Galilee started speaking in languages they had never practiced or spoken, and they weren’t just babbling. They were speaking intelligible words and a coherent message about Jesus and what God was saying through Jesus.

One of the wonderful and glorious things about that specific miracle, is that it shows God’s desire to make himself known to *all* people. Jesus isn’t what God has to say to a limited number of people who were born in the right place, or have a certain skin color, or meet some other criteria. Jesus is God’s word to *everyone* – every single person that God has created in love and with purpose - and in the miracle of Pentecost, God reveals how God wants to accommodate us by speaking to us in language we can understand.

Sometimes that might mean literal language similar to what happened in Acts. I’ve told a story before that I heard about a woman who was praying for a friend, and suddenly, she began praying in a language she didn’t know. The woman she was praying with perked

up and said, “you’re speaking Russian,” which was her native tongue. The woman who was praying asked her, “what am I saying?” And the woman told her, “You’re saying, ‘my dear child, my dear child’” which turned out to be exactly what the woman needed to hear to give her assurance that God loved her. That is one way that God might accommodate us, but at other times God might use the language of art, or beauty, or science, or even an emotional experience through which we come to understand who Jesus is and what God is saying to us through him. God knows how to reach us, and God does.

God goes to great lengths to speak our language so that we can know that God is real and God is with us; so that we can know that we are loved and wanted; so that we can know that our sins have been forgiven and our failures can be redeemed; so that we can know that God holds something more for us beyond the dead ends we’ve come to; so that we can know that there is a future and a new world beyond the brokenness, and pain, and injustice that fill this world. This is what God says to us in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, who filled the apostles on Pentecost and enabled all of those people to hear and understand what God was saying- the Holy Spirit is still empowering the church to say what God wants to say so that all people can have a chance to hear and respond.

This point is so important. The Pentecost story is about something that started on a particular day in history, but it didn’t end when the sun went down. Peter pointed to the prophecy in Joel which gave meaning to the events of the day. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit wasn’t limited to a few people who were empowered to speak God’s word for a single occasion. That was how the Spirit was given in the ancient days when Moses was charged with leading the people. Like we read in Numbers, God gave the Spirit to some who were empowered to lead and guide the people, but the prophet Joel looked forward to a day when the Spirit would be poured out on all of God’s

people, the young and the old, the men and the women, and they would all be empowered to tell others what God had to say. On Pentecost Peter proclaimed that that day had now come, and all these years later, we are still living in the age when the Spirit has been poured out on us so that we can tell our friends, and neighbors, and strangers, what God has to say.

I know that some people seem *too* eager to tell other people what God has to say, and when they tell you that God said this or that, sometimes you might be thinking to yourself, that doesn't seem like something God would say. I'm not too sure about that. On the other hand, there are some people that we trust to tell us what God is saying. We recognize that God has gifted and called some to be teachers and to speak with authority, and we set them apart for the ministry of preaching and teaching. Of course, just because someone says they have gifts for teaching doesn't mean that they do, and in our denomination, our pastors and leaders discern their calling in community so together we listen for God's call and affirm that a person has received a call. Some are gifted with particular gifts, but the outpouring of the Spirit on all Christians means that even if we aren't all called to be pastors or teachers, we are all both called and empowered to speak to others about what God has to say. Many of us, even those who are called to be teachers, might feel like that's a little bit scary. How can I tell anyone else what God has to say? What if I say the wrong thing or misrepresent God or the truth in some way?

I think we have to be honest about the fact that too many times the church and those in the church have claimed to be saying what God has to say, but they did get it wrong. I've been reading a memoir this weekend about a woman who got entangled in a church fellowship that twisted Scripture and claimed to speak with authority from God, but in reality, she suffered from spiritual and other forms

of abuse that were sanctioned in that community. That's an extreme example, but there are other ways that the church and people in the church sometimes say what God isn't necessarily saying or misrepresent what God is saying. Often it happens when we become focused on our personal preferences or agendas. Instead of saying, "I don't like this," it becomes "God doesn't like this," and instead of "this is what I want," the message becomes, "this is what God wants."

As we think about things like that, it might cause us to feel a bit fearful or timid about the idea that we have been empowered to speak up and tell others what God has to say, but the help that we find, and the confidence, is when we remember that what *God has to say is Jesus*. What God has to say is Jesus, and if we want to, and if we are willing to tell others what God has to say, we simply need to focus on and keep the focus on Jesus. Jesus is what God has to say, and he's what we have been empowered to say, too. That's so freeing, isn't it? You don't have to be great at apologetics so that you can argue people into knowing God. You don't have to have been to seminary so that you can quote all the great theologians to people. You don't have to be someone who receives supernatural dreams and visions. We just need to know Jesus ourselves and keep pointing people to him. The band sang "Give me Jesus" at the beginning. That's what we're called and empowered to do. Give them Jesus.

So, what does that look like? It could look like Peter on the day of Pentecost. You could find yourself preaching to a crowd of people bearing witness to who Jesus is and what God has done for us in him, but probably, what is closer to reality is that you will find yourself having chances to talk about Jesus and what you have seen and known about him in your own life. You might have chances to tell people what God has to say by loving someone with the love of Jesus that is in you giving them the opportunity to feel and experience God's love through your actions. You might forgive someone, and through

your forgiveness, the Holy Spirit may help that person to hear God saying through you, “this is what Jesus like, and I am like Jesus. I forgive you, too.”

Over 2000 years after Pentecost, people are still reaching, and wondering, and wanting to know who God is, and the living Jesus who is present with us through the Holy Spirit speaks to us today to remind us that God is still speaking! God is still speaking the Word God has always been speaking and until he comes again, the Spirit is empowering us to keep saying Jesus. Say Jesus with your words. Say Jesus with your life. Say Jesus with your love. Amen.