

Sermon Title: **“Beyond Languages and Differences”**

Bible: **Acts 2:1-21**

When: on Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2024

Where: about 25 people (plus YouTube viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Pentecost!

Today is Pentecost Sunday. Pentecost literally means “fiftieth day” in Greek. It is the fiftieth day after Easter Sunday. Let us look at the timeline of Jesus and the Pentecost. About two thousands years ago, God became a human being and came to us as baby Jesus. We celebrate this as Christmas! When Jesus was about thirty years old, Jesus was baptized, was tested in the wilderness for forty days, and began his ministry on the earth. About three years later, Jesus entered Jerusalem, which we celebrate as Palm or Passion Sunday. Jesus suffered and died on the cross on Good Friday. After three days, Jesus arose from the dead, which we celebrate on Easter Sunday! After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples for forty days. And Jesus ascended into heaven, but he promised to send the Holy Spirit. After ten days, which is on the fiftieth day after Easter Sunday, the Holy Spirit came to all of the disciples. Today’s scripture describes the moments of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost Sunday! Thanks to the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Good

News about Jesus was spread. After Peter's message, about three thousand believers were added. So, traditionally, Pentecost has been regarded as the birthday of the church!

2. Beyond Languages and Differences

The Holy Spirit came like a wind and a fire. With the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' followers began to speak about what God has done in other languages, which was not a mysterious heavenly language that we cannot understand, but it was in languages of different ethnicities of people on the earth. They also heard them speaking in their own native languages. If we look at the map, those languages covered almost every language that was known at that time. Asia means not the Asia that we know now, but the Asia as known as Asia Minor, a part of Turkey, officially the Republic of Türkiye. What an amazing miracle! Even though they spoke different languages, they could communicate with each other. I do not know if we could recreate this moment of Pentecost with the development of AI or translators. But we do know that language goes beyond the spoken word itself. Language is not just a word. Language can contain our history, our culture, and our soul. We can communicate with each other with words, both verbal and nonverbal. Many experts say that we communicate with each other with more than 50%, or about 70%, some experts argue, of nonverbal language. My first language is Korean. Mihyun, my wife's first language, is also Korean. We speak in the same language. So, are we so peaceful all the time? No. Sometimes we misunderstand each other, argue with each other, and miss the points! I thought that I knew what was said in Korean, and I thought that I was a good listener. But it can still be my

big mistake. Is this story only my story? How about you? How about us?

Many times, or perhaps always, we might need to listen not only with our ears and eyes, but also with our hearts. And I believe that listening to each other with hearts happened on the first Pentecost, beyond languages and beyond differences. Then, was it an amazing miracle? Sometimes when we face a miracle, we tend to doubt and question rather than accept. That happened on the first Pentecost. They thought that the reason why they heard each other was because of the new wine. They thought that they were drunk and could hear each other better. It is possible to feel that way. But Peter explained that it was not because of the wine, but because of the Holy Spirit.

4. The Holy Spirit Is In You and Me!

When I stand and speak at this pulpit, I am amazed. Your English and my English are different. As I shared, language is more than the words themselves. When we say, “I love my church,” we can hear not only the verbal words, but also nonverbal words. The word “church” can contain a lot of meanings, stories, emotions, and experiences. We have our own stories, our own uniqueness. But here, when we share the message, when we sing together, when we pray for each other, and when we worship together, don’t we experience that we are one in Christ? That’s because the Holy Spirit is in you and me.

As Peter shared from the prophet Joel, God declared that God poured out the Spirit upon all of us. In the Old Testament, the Spirit was only for specific persons like the great leaders, judges, or prophets. When Jesus was on the earth, only the chosen disciples and followers

could meet Jesus. But in this time of the Holy Spirit, we are all chosen people, and we are all God's beloved ones. The Holy Spirit is in you. The Holy Spirit is in you and me. The Holy Spirit is in us and in others. That's how God created all of us with the Spirit at the beginning, and that's how God leads and guides us day by day. We are all coming from different places. We might use different verbal and nonverbal languages. But the Holy Spirit in us makes us one and leads us to listen to each other, hear each other, and love one another. I love Pentecost! I love the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. It is okay to question the Holy Spirit. Please do not be against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is already in you. With open minds and open hearts, please look at yourselves and others. May God's Holy and sustaining presence and the joy of living together with the Holy Spirit be with all of us!

Closing Prayer

Loving and living God, thank you so much for sending the Holy Spirit in us. Your Holy Spirit is still and now working in us and in our lives. Beyond our languages, beyond our differences, we are one in you. We are your people and we are your workers. Use us and bring our church to this community! In Jesus' name. Amen.