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## *When Understanding Feels Like Home*

**A sermon by the Rev. Canon Lauren Holder**  
**The Day of Pentecost – Year B**

Have you ever known the supreme frustration of being misunderstood?

Perhaps you lost your voice and couldn't be heard, or perhaps you were in a country whose language you had not mastered, or perhaps you and your partner were talking past one another with no compromise in sight, or maybe you were just talking to your Alexa device that couldn't comprehend your request to set an egg timer for 7 minutes.

One of my children had an unfortunate but necessary procedure this week to place a palate expander in the roof of her mouth. No longer able to let her tongue rest where it ought to, she talks like she has a mouthful of marbles. It is difficult for her, but it's also difficult for those of us listening to her and watching her frustration at being misunderstood.

What is it about understanding one another and being understood that affects us so? Why does it mean so much to us?

Simply put, I think to be understood or to understand *feels like home*.

I think of that when I read today's story from Acts. So many people were gathered together for the Jewish festival of Pentecost. The Jewish people had been scattered near and far, but this celebration of the law was cause to bring everyone together. And yet, as with any family reunion, there is that inevitable discomfort of being misunderstood or of not understanding.

And then a violent rushing wind comes, and tongues of fire descend, releasing the tongues of the disciples to share the stories of God in their lives—to share their experiences of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

And notice what it is that astonishes the people gathered: "How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?"

How is it that we hear?

Wow—I can understand! I hear you! I understand you!

Suddenly this group of scattered people feels at home.

And it transforms them. Transforms all of them—the people who hear and understand are transformed, but only after the people speaking have been transformed to be understood.

I am struck by the importance of sharing our stories about God's work in our lives. We have to share our stories if people are going to be able to hear them. We can't hide them under a bushel, we have to let our stories shine. Your story of God showing up in your life has the power to transform the world. The Spirit shows up in our stories.

And—and—we have to share them in a way that people can hear them. Not just repeating the same story a little louder each time, but sharing the story in a new way.

And that may require allowing the Spirit to transform us. We may have to be willing to change. We have to be willing to share ourselves, but we may have to be willing to share in a new way. And that's transformative work, too.

Friends, the church needs your stories! That's why Peter quotes the prophet Joel: I will pour out my Spirit on ALL FLESH. Young, old, male, female, slave, free—you name it, and the Spirit is going to bless it. Because all our stories are needed to transform this church and transform our world.

Perhaps this is why the Holy Spirit speaks to us in so many different ways...

A violent wind that pushes you beyond your comfort zone.

A sweet dove who gently sings a word of comfort.

A fire within that sets your life ablaze without burning you out.

Or, as is often the case in my own life, an obstinate wild goose who joins a chorus of voices pointing the way.

In a few moments we will sing together a beautiful and sacred chant: Veni Creator Spiritus—Come, Creator Spirit. This 9<sup>th</sup> century hymn has been sung around the world and across time throughout the church, and especially at sacred times of ordinations and consecrations. It speaks to the transformative nature of the Holy Spirit. It speaks an old truth. It is a bold invitation for the Spirit to set our souls on fire for God.

When we sing it together, I invite you to pray the words you are singing: *Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, and lighten with celestial fire.*

Pray these words that you may be transformed by the Spirit of truth and love that is God.

Pray these words that this church and the universal church may be transformed by the Spirit of truth and love that is God.

May today's celebration of Pentecost be for us a true renewal, a true revival, a true transformation—so that all who hear us proclaim the truth of God's love may say: I hear you! In my own language: I hear you! I understand you. I am home.