

Good morning Horizons. Morning. How are you doing today? Yes. See? If I had a sticker, I will give it to you. A amazing. My name is in what it was on. I am the University of Minnesota. Nebraska Wesleyan University. Today is Pentecost, Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, five days after Easter. And it is a celebration of the birth of the church. And that's actually what I wanted to visit with you today.

About the scripture reading comes out of Acts chapter two versus one through 12. And there are a lot of very difficult names in it. So bear with me.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. This is all of the disciples. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in all their tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now, there we're staying in Jerusalem. These were God fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. And when they heard these sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment. Because we don't use that word too often in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken orally amazed the ask our in this who are speaking Galileans. Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?

Portions means elements residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, fringe, high and powerfully. Egypt and the parts of Libya. Libya about near Cyrene. Visitors from Rome, both Jews and Judaism, Cretans and Arabs. We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean?

So I don't know if you have been bewildered before by something amazing that has happened many, many years ago. There was a video on YouTube that went viral and I wanted to show it to you just a little bit of it. So let's take a look Wow.

That's a cool either way.

Double rainbow. Oh, my God. It's a double rainbow. All the way. What a sword dance. Whoa! Oh, wow, wow, wow. Whoa. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Whoa!

Oh, oh, oh, oh. Whoa, whoa. Oh, yeah. Oh.

Oh.

Oh, oh, oh, oh, my God. Look at that.

It's starting to look like a triple rainbow. Oh, my God. It's full on double rainbow. All the way across the sky. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh What does it mean?

You can find it on YouTube just right there. You just Google, not Google, but search for double rainbow The person, he became super famous. And unfortunately, a few years, a few years ago, he passed away. But in interviews, not where in which he participated, he said they know he

wasn't on drugs or anything. Right He was just taken by this thing that he has never before.

He was a very deep spiritual experience for him. And there was elation and then there was bewilderment. And what does this mean right So it is exactly the same questions that all these people from all over the world asked to thousand years ago when they heard these scholarly and speaking on their own tongues. What does this mean? They asked.

And we don't ask that question anymore for us. But what I think that it is fair for us to say, all right, Pentecost, the birth of the church. Now, what does that mean? What does it mean? What does Pentecost means to us other than it is the beginning of where we are today? Well, I for me to find the answer to that, I have to go all the way back to Genesis chapter one.

I know it's a long ways to go, but it is. I think it's as far as I can go at least in the Bible. Right. So Genesis Chapter one through 11. Our Stories of Creation. Genesis Chapter one in chapter two are two different very two different stories of the creation rate God making the world. But at the end of chapter one, you probably remember chapter one in the beginning God said, Let there be light.

And there was light. Right? But at the end of that chapter verses 28 when he's when God says, let us create humankind in our likeness, in our image, and in human beings came into being and then God said, Hey, go and feel the earth multiply filled the earth The idea behind this, though, is that since human beings were created in the image and likeness of God, by going into all of the Earth, we will be blessed to the Earth will be God's presence, God's blessing, to all the Earth.

And that happened in chapter one. Chapter two, we have the story of Adam and Eve and in the in chapter three, we have Adam and Eve sinning. And in at the end is really interesting because God kicks him out of the of the Garden of Eden. But a Jewish theologian that I know, he said, Well, you know, that can be seen as a punishment, but it's also almost like graduation.

It's like they knew now how to order, if they knew how to do all, they knew how to have babies now. So they should just go out into a world and multiply and feel the earth. After that comes the story of Cain and Abel and after the horrible thing that happens again Cain just he just went on and informed his own tribe and his own people.

Then there are genealogies of so and so, begat so and so and so and so, begot so and so, and they became really good at riding horses and so and so begat so and so and so and so he got so and so and they were really good at playing ping pong and so and so begat so and so and so and so began so and so in one part of that family was PlayStation three.

That one was Xbox, the other one was Nintendo. And then comes the story of Noah. And I look it up, look it up. And then at the end of the story of Noah, the same thing happens. God says now be fruitful and multiply and feel the earth. And and they did that. And then some wanted

genealogies and from there we learn Big 12 Conference versus the Big Ten conferences and things along those lines.

And then comes the story of the Tower of Babel and which is the last of the creation stories. And in, in the 10th novel people, they just got together and they created a big city. It was a great city. And they said, Hey, listen, let us build a tower that goes all the way to the heavens. And at the time that the people who were writing and reading this, this, these stories, they knew they had a better connection.

They knew exactly what they were talking about.

There. There's a picture here of a cigaret not to be confused for a cigaret but a cigaret. It's it was yours, a tower. You can think of it as a as it was like one of those. Imagine that may pyramids and in this were very, very large structures. And then the very top of it hill the ceremonial purpose, and it was called the gates of Heaven.

So when people where we're thinking about the Tower of Babel that we're thinking about this cigarets, they actually they were they were very common in, in Babylon. And in that Assyrian culture, So so people say, let's get together and let's build this city and let's build this this tower. So we might not be dispersed so God comes down and God says, I don't like this.

Oh, there we go. You see, it looks like a one of those Mayans pyramids sort of so yeah, that tower that the top of it is the gate of heaven.

So. So Doug came down and said, I don't like this and then what God does is that God gives away different languages. And then people couldn't finish building the city because they couldn't understand each other. And then what happens they disperse and they feel the earth, and they bless the earth.

You know, for most of my life, I. I always thought that the Tower of Babel was kind of like a punishment upon humankind. Walter Brueggemann, who is a biblical scholar, I'm grateful for him to to give a fresh interpretation to it, which is that God wanted for us to feel the earth, and we did not want to do that.

So he gave us different languages, different cultures, So in my spread and field years and in blessed years, so I think that for us to fully understand Pentecost, there is a direct connection to a Tower of Babel. And Pentecost has everything to do with us as a community, as people who are together, going out into the world and blessing the world, blessing all of that that is there is around us now.

I've done a little bit of traveling in my life I think that's great. It's a great bridge. So and probably the first place that I went was Fiji. And no, I didn't go to Sandals Fiji or something like that. It was a service. It was a service trip. I know it's kind of rough, but we went and it was, I don't know how many hours we it took us to fly to, to the main island and then, and then we took a tiny little plane that the runway was not bigger than this room before it jumped into the ocean to go to another island.

And then we got on a truck and we drove for 4 hours on a very bumpy road in. We finally made it to this village. And what is at the center of this village, a mess of this church you know, that the gospel has been spread through all the world.

But what I think that the the goodness of the kingdom of God has not being spread through all the world. The knowledge of who Jesus is and and what God has done through Christ you know, for us is is very much well spread. But how does that feel? What does that mean? Not so much. How was Snyder who he wrote a book community?

The Community of the King. He makes that point. He makes a point that you know, through through history, Christianity, we have been really good at talking about the individual salvation you know, and we've been really good at building our own version of God's kingdom by ourselves.

But what we fail to see is that what Jesus intended for us was that our faith the kingdom of God that we so much aspire to is not something that we can do on our own. Right. It's something that we have to do together. We have to do it in community. We have to do it as one Jesus.

In his final speech in the book of John, in the Gospel of John, he tells the he tells his disciples, Listen, I, I love you guys. He doesn't say that, actually, but he, he says You are my friends.

In the world will know that I have sent you because you love one another. Because you love one another. I at the end of of all of the speech of this, made a speech that Jesus has on the last night that he was with his disciples he knelt down and he washed the disciples feet in the and you know the story. Peter said, No, no, no, I don't want you to wash my feet.

And Jesus said, You have to. And then Peter said, Find and wash all of me and Jesus. Now you don't worry about it. Just feed in. It's Google. That's exactly verbatim what happened in. And it struck me this week as I was preparing him and praying for this, that that Jesus was washing the dishes or wash the disciples feet because he was preparing them to go out into the world, not as individuals but as a community, because the goodness of God's kingdom needs to be needs to feel the earth.

We need to do that together. It is not just each individual person here that is supposed to do acts of kindness, but as a community that is our calling. That is that is who we are.

So how how do we do that? Right. In which ways as a community are we choosing to be a blessing in order to all the world? I know that you do work in India and that's that's beautiful. And I know that you do work here, but which other places in Lincoln and outside of Lincoln is God calling this community to to live out that blessing, that is the kingdom of God you know, who are we choosing to be together in just a moment, we're going to to have communion.

And the sacrament calls us to to answer that question or to at least to wrestle with that question. Because even though because of COVID and

other personal preferences, we all have individual sunglasses the I'm sorry, we have individual cups you know, originally there is a powerful there's a powerful symbol in the the fact that it is one loaf.

We are one loaf. We are one body, and we are to be a blessing in all the world. It's just one cup. I know we all have individual cups, but in reality, it's one cup. We're all drinking from the same cup because we are one we are one what Pentecost did. What it means is that he grabbed a bunch of stragglers of people who are different ideas about the world, different ideas about themselves, different ideas about God and brought them together in, gave us the opportunity that together figure out who we are individually and who we are as a community.

What Pentecost did is that it has helped us as we come together to fall in love with God more deeply. Fall in love with each other more deeply, fall in love with the world more deeply and this is who we are. These who we're called to be So we're going to I'm going to pray for the elements, for the elements as you have them as well.

I want to say two things about that. The first one is wait until I do. I tear the bread and dip it in the for you to do your thing. I know we went from, you know, Jesus to OK instructions but, you know, that way I think it's a powerful thing that we're all taking that at the same time.

The second thing is that, you know, in this church, in the United Methodist Church, the communion is open to all. And anyone who will like to to have it, you're invited because this is the grace of God. This is something that God does for us. And we do believe we do believe that when we take that the wafer in the Jews, even though it's just Jews, that is just wafer, I don't know what wafers are made of but we believe that because Jesus is presenting this, gathering this place, because the Holy Spirit is present in this gathering this place, because God is present in this gathering, in this place that by us committed to that

is something changes within us my prayer for us is that as the grace of God changes our soul in ways that we cannot see, that that might be an invitation for us to be together and change the world. On the night in which Jesus was arrested, he took bread and he gave thanks to God. He gave it to his disciples.

And He said, Jesus, my body, which is broken for you, take it in it and be grateful. After the supper was sober, he took the cup he'd give it. He gave saints, he gave it to his disciples, and he said, This is the cup. This is my blood of the New Covenant. We're out for you, for me, for the forgiveness our sins drink from this cup, all of you, as often as you can.

And every time that you do it, remember me. And so tonight, no. And today we remember God's mighty acts of Jesus Christ in our lives and in this world. Let us pray Lord, we give you thanks for this time in which we celebrate the birth of the church. We celebrate our births and we celebrate that you are with us.

So once more, we ask you for you to pour out your Holy Spirit upon these gifts of bread and wine and make them before us, the body and the blood of Christ. So we might be for the world, the body of Christ by His blood by your spirit. Make us one with you and one with one another. US.

We are one in ministry this world until you come back and we feast with you face to face and your heavenly method through your son, Jesus Christ, with your Holy Spirit, your holy church with you, thanks Almighty God, now and forever with you think so? Because you have made us one with you and one with one another with you. Thanks. Because you have called us to be one to love one another and to go out to the world you love. Those who have not experienced love to show kindness to those who don't know what kindnesses to mend hearts and bodies to be your presence in this world so as one Lord, we pray to you the words that you taught us by our father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.