

Exegesis on Acts 2:1-21 for PossABILITY Sunday

At first it may seem challenging to combine PossABILITY Sunday with Pentecost. After all, what does sensitivity to special needs have to do with the coming of the Holy Spirit? Actually, quite a lot!

The first point to emphasize in a Pentecost/PossABILITY sermon is that the crowd was all together. There were no limitations. In Acts 2:4, it says they were **all** filled with the Holy Spirit. Too often we look to “the usual suspects” as helpers in the church. When we take that verse seriously, we realize that we need to look around for places where we have missed the Spirit. Was the Holy Spirit in that mentally challenged person who was calling out? Maybe God is speaking through the person in a wheelchair or with crutches. What if, instead of viewing a person with a disability as a person who needs our ministry, we looked at a person with a disability as a person who has something to contribute to our ministry?

Another point about the Pentecost story from Acts 2 is the importance of communication. People were speaking in other tongues and able to interact with those they were once unable to understand. Opening a conversation with the differently-abled can lead to a powerful “blowing” of the Holy Spirit. Often we have not listened to the needs of the challenged. Ask people in your congregation if they have noticed any barriers to worship. Was there a problem reaching a door or sink? Could they hear the liturgy well enough or see the bulletin clearly enough? Did they in any way feel excluded from a part of worship? Listen! Part of communication is listening! A sermon preached this day could include some results of listening to those whose voices have not been heard well in worship.

Finally, the result of that improved communication in Acts 2 is amazement and wonder. Whenever we can reach outside of our previous limitations, we are filled with amazement and wonder. To whom is the Holy Spirit directing you? The Joel quote in Acts 2 reaffirms the importance of inclusion -- sons and daughters, young and old, even servants are included in ministry to share the Word of God. Lowering barriers of age, ability, gender, and class is part of the Pentecost message as well.