

MY REFLECTION

Acts 2

²When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

²² 'You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— ²³this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. ²⁴But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. ²⁵For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence."

²⁹ 'Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, "He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption."

³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, ³⁵until I make your enemies

your footstool.' " ³⁶Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' ³⁸Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' ⁴⁰And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

My Reflection

Having the responsibility of sharing my thoughts with everyone this morning makes me feel...really nervous. I know it shouldn't, since I have always felt accepted by my church family. But standing up in the front of the church is a little uncomfortable. The Adventure Bible I got when I graduated from Mrs. Marino's 2nd Grade Sunday School Class says Pentecost was originally a Jewish holiday, so many Jewish people from all over the world at that time were gathered in Jerusalem. On the first Christian Pentecost, God filled Jesus' disciples with the Holy Spirit. Flames of fire appeared over their heads and they each spoke in a different language so people from many different places could understand them and hear God's word about Jesus.

How does speaking in different tongues relate to our lives here today on Confirmation Sunday? It seems kind of far away and strange. For me, it means that each of us has been given different gifts from God and that by sharing those gifts, we can reach different people with the message of God's Love. My brother Nathan is a really good 1st baseman and is also a good left-handed pitcher. He is part of a baseball team at school and a travel team in Flemington. He shares his sense of humor and his friendship with his teammates each day. Sarah is a really talented field hockey player. I know because I went to indoor field hockey practices with her. She is also really good at softball, just like her sister. I'm not sure which one she'll play at Central (maybe both?), but I know she will be the nicest person on her team. Josh uses his humor to make everyone around him laugh. This happens as he participates in scouts, rec basketball or spending time with friends around town.

I like doing lots of things, but many of them seem to be related to music. I played a girl who chewed gum and turned into a giant blueberry in my middle school's production of Willy Wonka this year. I like to sing and I dance five days a week. I have made many friends at JP Case and my dance school through these activities. I try to be considerate of everyone's feelings in these different groups.

While each of our gifts put us in different places to share God's Love with different groups of people, the activities we do don't define us. We are also shaped by God through the experiences we have had or will have in our lives. Sometimes these are bad things that make it hard to believe God is watching over you.

Many of you know that, recently, my Aunt Lynn passed away. I and my entire family were here at church when we found out. It was a moment I will never forget. My brother, sister and I were close to my Aunt. She was my Mom's older sister. We spent every Thanksgiving at her house, most Memorial Days, Fourth of July's and Labor Days at the pool in her backyard with her family. We think of her grandchildren as our "fun younger cousins." Aunt Lynn was strong, smart, hardworking and funny. She always did her best to make other people happy. She was fine when I saw her at my cousins' birthday party on Saturday night and on Sunday morning she was gone.

I can't explain why she is gone. But losing my aunt is an experience I've had that will help me understand what other people are feeling when someone they love passes on. It will help me show them God's Love. For Nathan, it is the same. For Sarah and Josh, they may have had other experiences which will make them ready to reach out when people need God's Love. And all four of us will have more life experiences, good and bad, as we get older.

Because we have been raised with Three Bridges Reformed Church as part of our lives, we have had many chances to know God, to know Jesus. Many members of this church have taught us about Him. From Mrs. VanFleet who taught us all the Bible songs, to everyone involved with the Nursery School, which was started by Sarah's Grandfather, to Mrs. Cook—we could never graduate from her Sunday School class and we were happy for that, to Mr. Thornton with Trivia Sunday, to Mrs. Newborn, Mrs. Reuter, Mrs. Zehner and Kate with Music and More, to Pastor Ryan's kissing a pig at Vacation Bible school or doing some other crazy thing, we have heard God and Jesus calling us many times. Our church family at Three Bridges is the "Fellowship of Believers" that we have known.

Acts 2 verse 42 says "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." This is what many of the adults of our church have showed us. So we have learned all these things and watched them at our church and now we are making the choice to do them ourselves.

On the first Christian Pentecost, it says "Peter raised his voice and addressed the crowd." Peter had the courage to stand up and say "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

Peter said all this to a crowd of Jewish people who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate a traditional holiday. They weren't expecting to hear any of these things. Some of them believed Peter and some of them didn't. But it was God through the Holy Spirit that gave him the strength to communicate with the people and tell them the most important message of our faith. Just like the Holy Spirit was with Peter, he's with each of us too.

The Holy Spirit is our connection to God in today's world.

It's not always easy to find God, especially when things go wrong or bad things happen. But Sarah, Nathan, Josh and I have learned over the years at the church that He is always there. We just have to be looking for Him. Faith is believing He is there and being willing to let Him guide us through our lives, but we need to not separate ourselves from Him. Because of what we have done and learned in being part of the church, we are able to be close to Him. But what we need to remember as we keep growing is that we have to keep seeking and stay close to Him. Even when life is difficult, especially when life is difficult, we have to remember not to back away.

What about you? How will you stay close to God, even when life is difficult? Especially when life is difficult?