

SERMON: "SPEAKING OUR LOVE LANGUAGES"
TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT GENESIS 11:1-9
NEW TESTAMENT ACTS 2:1-21

May 24, 2026
Day of Pentecost

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INTRODUCTION

Looking ahead ... this Place for Everyone is going to need everyone, everyone.

There is a part each and every one of you can play, a way you can share your skills
That includes helping Pastor Johnny lead worship, which includes lots of parts ...
taking up the offering, running sound or PowerPoint, helping to prepare or serve
communion, being a greeter ... and helping lead worship, reading scripture

I want to be careful not to meddle too much. And I have not talked with Johnny
about this, but I bet he'd be thrilled to have a handful of people offer to
read one of the scripture lessons a few times a year or season

And I bet he'd even be willing to strike a deal with those readers ...

No readings with all those hard to pronounce names of people or places

What did we have one of those readings this morning, Acts chapter two

The story of Pentecost with a long list of peoples and where they come from

Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

I don't think I'm the only person reading the bible who gets to passages like this
hears all these strange sounding names of people or places ... and just
fast forwards past them, skips over them. I get it, it's easy to get stuck

Took me a few decades, but I've learned to stop doing that

Those names are named because they are important.

My apologies to people from Phrygia and Pamphylia

UNDERSTOOD & UNDERSTANDING

These many and varied people are mentioned in the story of the gift of the Holy Spirit not just to teach us some ancient geography, but to let us know what and for whom the Spirit is given. They heard, they all heard (Parthians, Medes, Elamites, etc.)
They all heard the good news in their own native, unique tongue

The Holy Spirit is a spirit of understanding – understanding the good news in words that are part of your vocabulary. And, please hear this in a sermon about hearing that this understanding is mutual. You can't really carry on a conversation with residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia if you don't know jack about Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia. You have to get to know them.

Let me try and explain it this way. You know I'm a big soccer fan. My team is Liverpool. I enjoy talking futbol but have not talked too much about the beautiful game in sermons I'd love to talk about how what the Reds need during this summer transfer window is an experienced number 6 who can protect our center backs, play on his own or in a double pivot, and break the lines with his forward passing.

Anybody have any idea what I'm talking about? Probably not.
Being understood means understanding who you're talking to, listening to them learning with and from them. Keeping up with the Premier League table is not a big part of the vocabulary in these parts. I'll save that talk to when I next talk to our oldest son Durham. He speaks that language, knows the songs even.

God gave the disciples, that includes us, the Holy Spirit so we might be understood when we talk about our faith. And being understood means making the effort to understand the other person, the other people – the stories they tell, the songs they sing, the vocabulary they use – the illustrations that work, and the ones that do not (like how Liverpool need a number 6 to protect our center backs.)

So, seeing that this is the one of the last times I get to share the word from this pulpit, let me get to the ask. This is what I have been asking and continue to ask of you It is something you are already doing as A Place for Everyone." So my ask is a 'to be continued.' It's about those Parthians, Medes and Elamites ...

Please let your faith and the language you use to express it fit this phrase
You may well have seen it before. I think this phrase pairs well with John 3:16 'God so loved the world' and the greatest commandment according to none other than Jesus to love God and neighbor. It is this ...
Think global. Act local. Or you can turn it around – Act local. Think global.

Show image – Act local. Think global.

WILLFUL IGNORANCE?

One of the cool shirts I found at Raygun (lots of cool shirts) is one that shows an outline of Iowa with the words “Ohio. The Great Potato State.”

It pokes fun at an ignorance of basic geography (geography, by the way, is about people as much as it is about place). Have our neighbors in these United States become to us like the residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia. Don't know much about them? Don't pay much attention.

The phrase, I believe works best when we think globally, then act locally
In many ways that is what the Spirit empowered the disciples to do
on that Pentecost Sunday. Because the Spirit gave them the ability
to know and speak in other languages they could think globally
Then they acted locally by spreading the word right there in Jerusalem

I used the word ‘ignorance’ earlier intentionally, an ignorance of geography.
Trying to be playful in how I'm trying to address a problem. Ignorance.
Ignorance is not stupidity. I'm not questioning anyone's intelligence
The root word of ignorance is ignore – to ignore someone or something

I've tried to talk about this problem before using the language of ‘willful ignorance’
of not making the effort to learn a little about someone or some thing
That willful ignorance is a dangerous thing. It leads away from, not towards,
the neighbors we are called to love. It leads us from not just skipping over
references to Parthians, Medes and Elamites but to thinking and talking
about them as others, as enemies, as ‘horrible people’ as some have said

I am so thankful you strive to be a willfully engaged people, you want to learn
You seek to love your neighbors by learning about them and from them
You seek to love and learn from the good people of Phrygia and Pamphylia
and people who talk about their club needing a number 6 and people
from Ohio who enjoy a potato from Idaho. You think globally. Keep it up!

Thinking globally translates to acting locally. It starts with a worldview
How we see the world, how we see the neighbor far away and close at hand
Do we see the world the way God does – so loves? Do we see it the way Jesus does
routinely stretching our boundaries and our definitions of neighbor?

That worldview is put to work in how we interact with the world right around us
How we act locally says a lot about how we see the world.

You're may be wondering when (or if) the preacher is going to connect this sermon
with the sermon title ... Speaking Our Love Languages? You've heard of those
Helpful resource for relationships, especially romantic ones

SUMMARY

You can show your love in a number of ways – words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service, physical touch, quality time. Which one or two might you find most meaningful? Which ones are you good at? Being OCD I can do some acts of service. Finding just the right gift. Not my strong suit.

It is a helpful resource for couples. But it is not just for couples
You can love your neighbor speaking these same languages
Words of affirmation are good therapy for curing willful ignorance
So too quality time (making time to get to know your neighbor)

Acts of service are certainly ways to act locally. Try Sunday Supper
I love all the ways you can speak your love language for neighbor there
Practice hospitality by treating people as quests. Roll some silverware
chop some veggies, season the chicken. I love getting the UNI student athletes
who regularly help there to season the food. You're seasoning for 100. Go for it!

Thinking globally and acting locally is great way to speak your love languages
loving neighbor like we are commanded to do. And it is doable
It can be done in any number of ways.

Like I said, having only one Sunday left with you, I don't want to meddle
But here's an idea how you might think globally and act locally ...
You don't have to travel, especially today in our inter-connected world

You can think globally and act locally by asking your pastor,
"Hey, Johnny, for Pentecost next year, sign me up to read that scripture
The one about the ... Parthians, Medes and Elamites ...

verses read aloud by various members of the congregation

and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia,
Phrygia and Pamphylia,
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and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,
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in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.