

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR JUNE 8, 2025 – PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-21

- Though Pentecostal and Charismatic churches understand this passage as a “baptism of the Holy Spirit” with a corresponding gift of tongues, the manifestation described here is different from what is experienced in these churches. In a Pentecostal worship service, one often would witness what is called *glossolalia*, a spontaneous expression of sounds unknown to the speaker that sounds to an outsider like gibberish. Acts 2 describes a scene where the disciples know what they are saying. It is just in a language that they do not know. Some have understood this scene as a contrast or a restoration to what happened at Babel in Genesis 11. At Babel, different languages descend upon, divide, and scatter the people who are trying to build a tower toward God. At Pentecost different languages descend upon the people in order to unify them so that all might understand what God has done through Jesus. It is an example of unity coming through the diversity of people, and it challenges us to find our unity in the midst of our differences.
- Peter understands this manifestation of the Spirit as the last days described in Joel, “before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.” Peter declares that the “Lord’s great and glorious day” is now here. Does that mean that we are far away from God’s day? How do we live into that day?
- Pentecost also challenges us to see what can happen when we open ourselves up to the movement of the Spirit. Are we willing to see how God might move upon us? What would we need to do to be so open?
- Though we may not know any foreign languages, there are “languages” all around us that we are called to speak. Pentecost challenges us to be relevant to the culture that surrounds us, making certain that our message is clear. What can we do to be relevant to the present culture of Rockdale County?

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

- For the writers of the psalms, the sea represented the forces of chaos, here illustrated especially by the presence of Leviathan – the great sea monster. The psalmist here proclaims that God is above all the chaos. When our lives seem threatened by the chaotic nature of life, what can we do to trust in the God that is beyond and behind it all?
- The psalmist also describes how creation and renewal are a part of the Spirit’s continued task. How can we be a part of God’s work in creation and renewal? Where do we see that work going on within our community?

Romans 8:14-17

- In these few short verses, Paul presents a powerful message for our present time: we are not called to be afraid. We are not called to give in to a spirit of fear. Rather, we are called to trust in the Spirit of God that unites us all as one family, as children of God. How do we call people away from fear?

John 14:8-17, 25-27

- What does it mean that Jesus says that we “will do greater works than these”? Perhaps Jesus means that so much more can be accomplished among a community than any single individual. Perhaps Jesus means that a greater work can happen when the gospel expands beyond our initial communities.
- Note how Jesus describes the work of the Spirit:
 - The Spirit is the promise of God’s presence with us forever. (v. 16)
 - The Spirit teaches us and reminds us of all that Jesus has passed on. (v. 26)
 - The Spirit gives us a peace that goes far beyond the world’s sense of peace. (v. 27) – Note how again, like Paul, we are called to not give in to fear.