

May 24th, there had been 219 Mass Killings across America in 2019. In the last 11 days there were 23 more. Last Sunday a colleague sent out a note stating: "People come to worship after something like Uvalde, demanding answers. They are angry and afraid, confused and bewildered. Before the reporters and pundits, the professional theologians and politicians have placed a spin on events, interpreting what is going on and what we should have said; they want answers to resolve their confusion and bewilderment, they want to know: Where is God?, Why God allowed this to happen? When as a Man of God what I most want is to crawl into the arms of God and weep."

According to Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the Hebrews had been slaves of Pharaoh, who after crossing the Red Sea looked to Moses to lead them. Like a great tower into Heaven, Mount Sinai reached to the clouds, God was revealed in Thunder, Lightning, Earthquakes, Fire and Smoke making people afraid. On the 50th Day after Passover/after entering the Desert Wilderness, Moses came down the Mountain with the 10 Commandments.

Thousands of years after Moses, Jewish People at Jerusalem knew to celebrate Pentecost, THE 50th Day, but having shared Passover and lived according to the Law all these years they no longer remembered Bewilderment and Confusion, they no longer remembered why they celebrated Pentecost! Originally, the Day of Pentecost was celebration of God's Gift of the Law, the 10 Commandments, but now for the Disciples after Easter, Pentecost became God's gift of the Holy Spirit.

Demonstrating that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, they each have a Fire, there is Wind (like when Moses was up Mount Sinai) and they spoke different languages. This was not speaking in tongues! When Paul refers to that in Corinthians, the Greek word for Speaking in tongues is "Glossalalia" which is not here. Instead there is reference to Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya and Rome, each hearing about God in their own language! Now the Disciples were not learned academics, so the Holy Spirit was not just an undescribed feeling, but gave each person specific gifts to listen to and address these people where they were coming from.

So if on Pentecost, everyone was united by hearing the Word of God in their own language, Was there ever a time when all the world had had One Language, that was then divided and confused and WHY? The Tower of Babel in Genesis. Except, this is not just a story of the origin of diverse languages, that is the side-effect. What is this story about?

Go back to the first sentences of Genesis 11. "The whole world had One Language and common speech. The people were Nomads moving Eastward. They found a plain in Shinar and settled there." Skipping a bit "They said, let us build for ourselves a city with a tower that reaches into the heavens, so we can make a name for ourselves, to not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." So following Noah and the Flood, what were we supposed to do to be? We were supposed to leave places like Minnesota, Colorado, New York to wander the earth looking for Green Valley! The problem in this passage is that people SETTLED. We were never intended to SETTLE. Humanity was created to search and yearn for God. But more so, when our ancestors settled, they built a City with a Tower into the Heavens, that just as in the Garden of Eden the people wanted to be like God. Witnessing this, God CONFUSED and BEWILDERED humanity, giving us different languages, not as a GIFT but in order that we not conspire together to be God.

As long as we are at this point, the truth of the matter is, that there was not a reporter from FOX or CNN imbedded with the people in Genesis, writing down action on the scene. It may be, that as "the Books of Moses," The story of the Tower of Babel was revealed to Moses, when atop Mount Sinai receiving these

five books. But there is also belief that after King David and King Solomon when the Nation of Israel was destroyed by Assyria, dispersed over the face of the earth, while the remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin were exiled to Babylon their stories were told. In Babylon, our ancestors had been told Babylonian Myths about the Gods of Babylon and Creation stories; So the Jews told their stories of Creation. In this far off place, fearing CONFUSION and BEWILDERMENT after years of war, in Exile, being LOST, they told stories of people "babbling on and on" which sounds a great deal like BABYLON!

How many times throughout history have we been BEWILDERED, CONFUSED, afraid of LOSS and DEATH? After escaping Pharaoh, being confronted with a new Beginning in the Desert Wilderness, Looking to the Mountains where there were Lightning, Fires, Thunder and Wind.

When Moses had been gone more than 40 days upon the Mountain.

When the Monarchy of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians then the Babylonians.

When Jesus' followers witnessed his death and his Ascension and feared for their future.

When persecuted by Rome

At the bombing of Pearl Harbor and The destruction of the World Trade Center,

at all the many Mass Shootings, we have been BEWILDERED and CONFUSED, ANGRY and AFRAID.

These are not occasions for us to hide in a locked Upper Room.

We are called by the Holy Spirit of God to go out into the world. to listen and talk with other people no longer trying to BE GOD, but to live as FOLLOWERS of JESUS CHRIST.

There is a curious distinction, between us and creatures that live beneath the seas. We have our skeletons on the inside, giving form and stability to our muscles and organs and brain. Crustaceans have the same form of manufacturing a calcified bone to protect muscles and organs and their brain, except that theirs is on the outside as a shell. Throughout life our bones grow with us. Thanks to modern science and medicine, when we break bones they can be casted and heal, or as in the case of knees and hips sometimes totally replaced. BUT When the Crustaceans' shells become too heavy, or too cumbersome, they shuck it off and begin to grow something new. I have spent my life rehabilitating, remodeling, reforming ideas and houses, churches, organizational structures, missions and ministries... Maybe there are times when we need to shuck off that upper room where we were locked in fear, to create something completely new in the Spirit.

I love when people send me questions or provocations for sermons. This week, I received one asking why? WHY we seem to have given up on the Holy Spirit? Often times we read of the One God of Israel. At other times, we describe Jesus as our Savior, who was born at the time of Caesar Augustus and Herod the Great and suffered and died at age 33 and rose for us. People often pray to Jesus or to God. Is the Holy Ghost just something we give lip service to, as in the Apostles' Creed: "We believe in the bodily resurrection, the Holy Spirit, the Holy catholic Church, the Forgiveness of Sins and the Life Everlasting?"

Next Sunday is designated as Trinity Sunday, where we are invited to consider how God can be One and yet Three? A part of our difficulty is that we are very much ruled by time. So we think of God as the Creator, and Jesus as the Savior during the Roman Empire, and the Holy Spirit coming 50 days after Jesus' Passover... But in the Beginning, when chaos and darkness covered the Earth the Holy Spirit brooded over the face of the deep. When Israel was oppressed by the Egyptians they prayed for a Savior, and the Holy Spirit passed over. Rather than thinking of the Trinity as three distinct persons in three separate times, I hope that we can believe and imagine our relationship with God, our Trust in God, as ONE who enters in to save us from our fears, from death, from our addictions; ONE who LOVES and FORGIVES us all things. ONE who continually broods over us, inspires us blowing fresh possibilities and abilities into us. ONE who

even now, Two Thousand Twenty-Two years after the Resurrection, some Eight thousand years after the first Passover in Egypt, is still GOD for us CREATING. That when we SETTLE and begin to think that we have the power of being God ourselves, we can still be BEWILDERED and CONFUSED by something as simple as differences of culture or language, and we are not alone.