

I am flattered that Caro has enough confidence, maybe misplaced confidence, to invite me to share the gospel with you today....

...the 50th day of the Feast of the Resurrection. We have had 50 days of feasting. Now, I don't know about you, but I am tired of feasting. I cannot look at another Cadbury creme egg. They need to be put away for another year. I am ready to get back to doing ordinary things. I'm not going to say normal things because we live in a time where there is nothing that is normal. But we are asked now to go back to doing the ordinary. And we need to listen carefully, attentively to the content of the Book of Acts. This book that recounts the first generation following Jesus's resurrection and dissension.

This first generation when there had been no church where the seven last words of the church did not yet exist. You do know what those are. We've never done it that way before. They are faced with. "Oh, we have to figure it out." *Then* they can say we've never done it that way before. And the great things about Acts is this community is not afraid of failure. They're not afraid to fall flat on their face and pick themselves up and say, "Oh, well, that didn't work. Let's try something else and see what works." Because this is a community being thrust into a world that needs desperately good news.

They are thrust into a world that is frequently terrifying. You can hear them saying from time to time, "Oh, dear, I'd rather not do that." And the Spirit says to them, "Oh, just go ahead and try it." We find ourselves in that time again, in a frequently hostile world. Where we would prefer to say, "Oh dear, I'd rather not do that." And the Spirit whispers to us "Oh, go ahead. Try and see what will happen."

This year I am particularly attracted to this reading from Acts. It's probably in the top five well known readings from Scripture. And this year what attracted me is the reminder that the community that we're talking about (we are told in the first chapter) is 120 men and women. We only know the names of maybe a dozen of those. 120 men and women. Luke, the gospeler, adds that they are sent. And they're not so very far from home, actually. They're so down the street. Because as you pay attention to what it is, they are sent to talk to immigrants, to resident aliens to people who aren't quite proper. They're sent to talk to people who are not comfortable in Hebrew, not necessarily comfortable in Greek. They are comfortable, some of them, in Latin. The first thing they are sent to do is to listen.

When I was learning foreign languages, one of the things that was revelatory was the subtleties of German, and one does not think of German as a subtle language at all. But there are words laden with meaning. As I have begun to struggle to learn Spanish. I have learned words that overflowed with meaning that is not conveyed in English.

They were sent to listen. And then speak. And what strikes me is this is a crowd of disciples who are not powerful. They are not significant. They're nameless. Probably if we go back and pay attention to what John says about Easter afternoon, they're scared. And the Spirit says, "Go. Go and be good news." And that takes some courage. It takes something to learn to live with diversity. When my father retired from the Army in 1970, (the Army is going to come up again in a minute) we moved to Cleveland, Ohio, and Cleveland was the first non-military dominated community I had ever lived in. And it was a complete and total mystery to me.

Some of my initial conversations dealt with living in religiously pluralistic communities because, frequently with a name like Greenwood, one of the opening questions to me would be "where do you go to temple?" In the first time I was asked this I was sort of "huh. Oh, the assumption is I'm Jewish" and the only thing I could think of was to respond to was, "well, I go to Temple St Paul's," which explains a whole bunch of stuff. But down the street from us was a bakery. Lucy's Sweet Surrender.

Now, let me tell you about Lucy's. Lucy's with a Hungarian bakery opened in 1957 and immediately following the Hungarian uprising, the Hungarian Revolution. When Cleveland became the second largest Hungarian speaking city in the world you would go to Lucy's and the expectation when you walked through the doors was that you would do business in their native tongue, you would speak Hungarian. And if that didn't work, try German. And if that didn't work, try Russian. And if you're really that desperate and pathetic, we might try English. And so I learned to order a slice of *dobos torta*, one of the finest pastries in the world. Exquisite. I learned to do it in Hungarian. Can't do it anymore. I'm not that desperate. But I had to learn that with that there came different understandings from what I was accustomed to in speaking English.

We are sent to speak in all languages. To listen in all languages. We are sent to be good news - to tell good news, to do good news. For people for whom there has been none. And that is going to push us into places we would not like to go.

Yeah. I am still shaken to the core of my being by the massacre in Uvalde. But I will also own, as I have sat with that and become aware of, there is another component. There is the perpetrator. There is the murderer. And we are sent to be with that young man. Not to set aside our rage, our anger. What we are sent to be good news. And what I am becoming increasingly aware of is that we live in a society that is filled with young men, and they are largely young men, between the ages of 18 and 24 who have adult bodies.

They look like grown ups. They have adolescent brains. Their brains have not grown into their bodies. And we are sent to be good news. Now then, in the olden days, what we used to do about this was we drafted them and put them in the Army where Sergeant Major Contreras would explain to them in graphic, simple detail how the world works. And things were relatively fine. They had an opportunity for their brains to grow into their body. We don't have that anymore.

It is imperative for us, as disciples this as the bearers of good news, as good news. To figure out the way. To be with, to raise up, to form males age 18-24 to be good and faithful disciples. Now our Mormon friends have figured out their way of doing it. They send them on mission. What is our way? What language do we need to speak?

What language do we need to speak? That invites these young men. Who scared the living daylights out of us... How do we invite them? What language do we use? The same. "Come. Come to this table." We have been equipped, today we celebrate being equipped, to do that work to be good news to people who are broken. Now. The only thing to do is to get up and go to it. Amen.