

All Flesh
Acts 2:1-18
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In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was a formless void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. And the wind, the Spirit, she hovered right there. Right there over the waters.¹

And also in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word, Christ, was in the beginning with God and with the sweeping, hovering Spirit. And all things that came into being—
the day and the night, the evening and the morning,
the sky and the sun, the moon and the stars,
the sea and the land, the fish and the birds,
the trees and the bushes, the grass and the flowers,
the cattle and the creeping things, the wild animals and the not-so-wild animals,
and the humans, the male and the female,
the full spectrum, not just one or the other,
but both/and, the full spectrum of gender identity—all these and more that came into being, all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible came into being through Christ.²

And without Christ, not a single one of these good and very good things, came into being. And it is in Christ, that everything, absolutely every single thing, holds together.³

In the beginning was God.
In the beginning was the Spirit.
In the beginning was the Word.

And eventually, the Word, who is Christ, became flesh. He did not just become a human in a human body, but he became flesh and lives among us here on earth.⁴

On the very first Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Jesus' resurrection, a mighty wind swept through the place where they were. The disciples felt the wind, the Spirit, hit their faces and blow through their hair. She filled the room and hovered right there. Tongues of fire appeared and rested on each of them, and they began to speak.

They spoke in languages from all over the world—
languages they did not know existed,

¹ Genesis 1:1-2

² John 1:1-4 and Colossians 1:15-17

³ Colossians 1:15-17

⁴ John 1:14

languages they only knew a few words of, languages they maybe one day hoped to learn—because the Holy Spirit had swept through, hovering over each of them, giving them the ability to speak, giving them the ability to proclaim the gospel of love and justice, so that anyone who spoke any language might hear and know the good news.

The Spirit could no longer be contained to the house they were in. She needed to get out. She needed to sweep through the city and beyond. She couldn't only hover there in the house with only the disciples. So, they opened the door to the house and the Spirit swept right out the door and they followed.

They caused quite a commotion. They got louder and more excited each time one of them spoke a new language. Passersby heard them, and they were curious. They followed the sound of the voices. The Spirit blew through the city, and maybe her mighty wind moved people towards the disciples.

So, a crowd began to gather and they were astonished. Each person in the crowd could understand the disciples in their own native language. They heard the disciples proclaim story after story of all God had done and was doing in the world. They heard the story of Jesus—his way of love and justice, challenging empire, his life that overcame death. Many in the crowd wondered how this was possible and what it could mean, but some accused the disciples of being drunk.

Peter overheard the few folks who claimed the disciples were merely filled with wine, and knew he needed to speak up. Peter called to the crowd, and said, "It's only nine in the morning, of course they are not drunk. But, this is what God spoke through the prophet Joel many years ago."

Joel foretells of a catastrophic environmental disaster. The land will be left desolate. Grain will not spring up from the ground. Trees will not bear any fruit. The soil will crack from drought. People and animals will starve and thirst.

But God cares deeply about the land and everything and everyone on it. God cares deeply for all of creation. God says to the soil, the animals, and the people, "Do not fear!" Rain will burst forth from the clouds to quench the thirst of the land, the animals, and the people. The locusts will swarm no more. The crops will be able to grow. There will be plenty to eat and to drink and the crops will be abundant.

After this God says,
"I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,

in those days I will pour out my spirit.”⁵

God spoke this through Joel, and then again through Peter on Pentecost. God will pour out God’s spirit on all flesh. Not just on all human beings, but on all flesh.

Flesh.

The Word became flesh and lives among us here on earth.

“I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.”

Flesh.

Jesus came to earth not just as a human in a human body, but as flesh. Flesh can be human, but it also can not be. Flesh is less than human, because flesh adds up to make a human. Flesh is not important. Jesus is human and Jesus is also flesh, meaning he was considered less than human. As a Palestinian Jew living under Roman occupation, of course the empire considered him to be nothing more than a pile of flesh. Of course the empire considered him a threat. Of course the empire conspired to execute him in the most violent way imaginable, because people will do things to flesh they would never do a human.

But, flesh is also other than human and more than human. In becoming flesh, Jesus takes into himself, not just humanity, but the entire created order.⁶ Theologian Elizabeth Johnson writes, “As a creature of earth, Jesus was a complex living unit of minerals and fluids, an item in the carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen cycles. The atoms comprising his body were once part of other creatures. The genetic structure of the cells in his body were kin to the flowers, fish, frogs, finches, foxes, the whole community of life that descended from common ancestors in the ancient seas.”⁷

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And all things that came into being—all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible came into being through Christ. And it is in Christ—in the flesh that he becomes, in the flesh that he is, in the flesh that is human, in the flesh that is less than human, that everything, absolutely every single thing holds together.⁸

All flesh will proclaim the story. The same story the disciples told when the Spirit swept and hovered on that first Pentecost. The story of all God had done and was doing in the world. The story of Jesus—his way of love and justice, challenging empire, his redeeming life that overcame death.

⁵ Joel 2:28-29

⁶ Charles L. Campbell, *The Scandal of the Gospel*, 78.

⁷ Elizabeth Johnson, *Creation and Cross*, 185-86.

⁸ John 1:1-4, 14 and Colossians 1:15-17

The earth and everything in it—
humans,
the humans who are considered to be nothing more than a pile of flesh,
whose lives empire tells us don't matter,
the humans who are considered a threat,
humans, and
the wild animals and the house pets,
the birds of the air and the fish of the sea,
the oceans whose waves frolic and crash on the shore,
the springs that gush forth in valleys and flow between hills,
the streams and the trees that grow beside them,
the grass and the flowers and the plants,
and the soil they grow from,
the mountains that stand tall and steadfast,
the clouds and the sun, the moon and the stars,
and the Wind,
the Wind that sweeps and hovers over the waters,
the Wind that hits our faces and blows through our hair,
the Wind that moves us where we need to go,
The Wind that pours out from every direction onto all things—
are all proclaiming the story.