

I remember the day we picked up Peter and Stanley at the Bismarck airport. I was a pastor in Hettinger, N.D. Peter and Stanley were refugees from Poland being sponsored by our congregation. In that North Dakota community only two women, Gertrude and Mary, spoke any Polish, Their parents had come from Poland. I took Gertrude and Mary with me on the 150 mile trip to pick up the refugees. I also knew that Peter spoke German – I knew just a little

On the trip home I sat in the front with Peter – Mary and Gertrude in the back with Stanley. Ich kann nicht verstehen – were the words I spoke most often – I cannot understand. How I wished I had the gift that the followers of Jesus received on the day of Pentecost. How I wished I could welcome Peter and Stanley in their native tongue.

Luke, the writer of the gospel and also writer of the book of Acts, tells us what happened that day. Mary, Jesus mother, the eleven disciples, and the other followers of Jesus had been gathered together in one place. 120 people devoted to prayer as they waited for the Holy Spirit to come to them. For forty days the resurrected Jesus appeared. Then Jesus ascended to the Father and for ten more days the disciples were together in prayer. Then on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after the day of Jesus resurrection, a violent wind filled the house where they were sitting and divided tongues as of fire came to rest on each of them. The Holy Spirit - the Spirit that came down from the Father after Jesus was baptized, entered that place, and filled those followers of Jesus. They began to speak in other languages. Each person heard them in his or her native language. The very thing I could not do in the car that day, these followers of Jesus did. God met all those people where they were, young men and old men, sons and daughters, men and women. Before the day was over three thousand of them believed in Jesus and were baptized – three thousand received the Holy Spirit.

In the centuries since the story of Jesus has been told and read in thousands of languages. The good news is that God is a God that meets people where they are. No pilgrimage is required to encounter God, not even a church building is required. Wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus name Jesus has promised to come to them and be with them. God could choose anywhere in the world for a temple – God chose to make his dwelling in you – the

Holy Spirit lives in you. Wherever Christ is proclaimed – in city or country, whether people are bound or free, God sends the Holy Spirit that they may hear and believe. God meets people where they are.

Where are you today? Looking for a job? battling sickness? running short of money? afraid about the way the world is? concerned about your children being safe? Are you feeling content and secure because you have a lot of money? happy because you have many friends? Are you lonely with the recent death of a loved one? Jesus does not wait for you to change – to get everything straightened out. Wherever you are today Jesus comes to you, through the Holy Spirit Jesus works to fill you up with faith in him, and love for God and for every person God has created. Jesus' Spirit is able to release you from every fear that binds you, free you to love and to share Jesus.

We who believe are all refugees in this world. Through Christ we leave behind the land of fear and greed and an eye for an eye and we go to the land of hope and forgiveness and love. On the day of Pentecost 3000 entered that new land where every sin is forgiven and every person is loved by God. You and I live in that land of faith. .

I remember some of the first English words Peter and Stanley learned: “No problem” and “piece of cake.”

Can you do this, Peter? Or can you do that? “piece of cake.” he would answer.

On the day of Pentecost a man who fifty two days before had been afraid to tell a servant girl that he was even acquainted with Jesus now stood before thousands and declared Jesus to be Lord. The Holy Spirit did that.

What is possible for you through the Holy Spirit? Will you take the chance to find out? Can you tell about Jesus? Can you give to help someone in need – even give them your own self? Can you let go of old fears and live in new hope?

“Piece of cake.” The apostle Paul declared, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

His confidence is a promise to you and to me. Can we become new people in Christ – live in the kingdom of the Almighty God? Can we flee from the oppression of fear?

“Piece of cake.” With the Spirit of God living in you – “piece of cake.” Remember that.