

Pfingstmontag 2019

Church-of-all-Nation Praise-Gottesdienst  
mit der Anglikanischen Christchurch-Gemeinde

Düsseldorf

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Apg 2 : 1- 12

**Der Geist Europas****Don't mention the Brexit!**

Acts 2 : 1-11

**Das Wochenfest (Pfingsten) kam, und alle waren versammelt an einem Ort. (2) Plötzlich kam, vom Himmel her, ein Echo wie das Brausen eines einfallenden starken Windes, und es erfüllte das ganze Haus, in dem sie saßen. (3) Dann erschien ihnen etwas, das aussah wie züngelndes Feuer, das sich in Feuerzungen teilte und auf jeden einzelnen von ihnen übersprang. (4) Sie wurden alle erfüllt mit dem Geist-der-Heiligung, und sie fingen an, in anderen Sprachen zu reden, eben so, wie der Geist es ihnen eingab zu sprechen. - (5) Nun wohnten in Jerusalem Judäer und gottesfürchtige Menschen aus aller Herren Länder. (6) Als nun diese Stimme (dieses Windbrausen) einsetzte, strömte die Menschenmenge zusammen und war bestürzt, denn ein jeder hörte sie in der eigenen Muttersprache reden – Parther, Meder, und Elamiter, Mesopotamier und Judäer und Kappadozier ... Kreter und Araber ... (12) Alle gerieten außer sich und hatten keine Erklärung, und sagten immer wieder einer zum andern: "Was will das sein?"**

**Halleluja. (Gal 3:28) Halleluja**

1

Everybody knows what an i-Phone is. Kids grow up with i-Pods, i-Tunes und i-Pads. But only a chosen few are familiar with the "i-Course". In this church here it is the abbreviation of >Integrationskurs Christentum<. We do i-courses for refugees and migrants from countries

the Pentacost story is telling us: – **Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia und Arabs** – we have them here. They speak very little German, they don't know anybody, but something dragged them into this city church. Once **staying in this place** – as the bible says – it is our duty to tell them where they are: How the Christian Occident works. The funny thing is: it is an eye-opener for ourselves. Did you ever try to explain what it means "being English", or "being German", or being ".eu" ?

What means "German"? °Some say it is about language. The language is the soul of a people. The great literature, the meaningful metaphores, dialects, jokes and street slang – this contains memory and mentality, humor and what is sacred to us.

°Some say it is our constitution, the "Grundgesetz", the Charta of rights and duties, freedom and commitment, values and limits. What we *all* share and what matters to *everyone* is put in here.

°Some say: the glue of a people is history. All we went through and endured, all we celebrated and survived, everything we achieved together, we ruined and recovered - this is our family story, telling us who we are.

°Some say: single nations are just a dab-of-paint/ a spot-of-colour in a larger painting. We live together in a small continent, in unfathomable varieties in close range. All the historic sites, the food, drinks, music, science, landscapes, cultures – nowhere else in the world you have such a variety within a day trip.

When **Parthians, Medes und Elamites, people from Mesopotamia und Arabs** arrive here they soon realize: Europe is nice, but complicated, and definitely not addicted to harmony. Actually, we love to disagree.<sup>1</sup> Europeans are disobedient.

<sup>1</sup> The shipwrecked Jew who was found on an isolated island was certainly European. After years alone he had built three houses: one was his hut to sleep in; one was his synagogue to go to on Shabbath; the third building was another synagogue he would never go to

Everyone insists to be special, unique and infallible. The only thing we agree on is not to agree on anything. We need each other but hate to be patronized. Privacy is sacred, my home is my castle. Even the mightiest politician has to appear before the firing squad of voters in his/her constituency. There are arguments over everything, and we feel uncomfortable if there is not even a minor scandal in the papers. Everything right? Hey, what's wrong?!

But miraculously, the chaos works, so far. - I don't mention the >Brexit<

2.

Some years ago two politicians had a public conversation. Sick of trouble they complained about a lack of sense of unity in Europe. We need, they said, something beyond trade, market shares, benefits and profits, something that inspires people emotionally. Europe needs a myth we all share, a narrative that unites and warms hearts and minds. - Sadly the two couldn't think of anything suitable.

The myth of Europe is already told, I hear the LORD say from His throne above. If Europe needs an idea, I provided it on Pentecost day, says the LORD. On Shavuot in Jerusalem I **gathered people from every nation under heaven**. They shared one belief in one God, but separated by their languages. They were all talking but unable to understand each other. So I had to do something, says the LORD, I had to invent something quickening and unifying, something that touched their hearts and connected their minds. Something to fan a fire of inspiration.

So it came to pass **when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a blowing of a violent wind came from heaven .... And all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in another tongue, as the Spirit enabled**

**them. ... Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another: "What does this mean?"**

3

**What does this mean?** What it was *meant to be* emerged not long after. The Pentecost-party returned home: **Parthians** back to Iran, those from **Mesopotamia** back to Irak, **Cretans** back to Greece and **Cappadocians** to the province of Asia (Turkey). While Jerusalem remained the centre of Christian identity, the Spirit spread peacefully with everyone touched by the gentle stroke of grace. From Rome the Spirit crossed the Alps, and today archeologists dig out Jewish miqwes and Christian baptisteries in Roman settlements along the Rhine, the Seine and the River Thames. While the Orthodox built the Hagia Sophia, the finest church ever in the world, from Scotland and Ireland missionaries came and planted churches and monasteries all over Celtic and German countries. Charles the Great picked up the Roman title "Cesar" to revive the so called >Holy Roman Empire<, connecting people from Sicily to Denmark, from France and to Saxonia. Suddenly an amazing exchange of theology and science took place. Students and teachers learned and taught in an early "Schengen-Raum", and Latin was the lingua franca, the English of those days everybody spoke at least a little. When church and society deteriorated the Spirit brought forth personalities like Jan Hus (Bohemia), Martin Luther (Germany), Johannes Calvin (France), Thomas Cranmer (England). The church of Christ was a family of the nations. Together they grew up, fought and failed, reformed and prevailed. The freedom of consciousness lead to freedom of speech. In the image of God people demanded human rights (even against church authorities). The 'Enlightment', a contained method of historic critics became a purifying force. Mission societies spread the Good News in the world. Europe, North and South, East and West, is a civilization of Jewish-Christian origin. It is Pentecostal. Our values, our sense of justice

and our democracy – it is all rooted in the same Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

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Today I read the Pentecost-story as a prophecy. We *are* people of different nations, individualized by language, political convictions and eating habits. But we are all baptized on the same Pentecost day by the same baptism in Jerusalem. From the outside Europe might appear chaotic, but inside there is one soul. Europe – **what does it mean?** If the Lord<sup>3</sup> wants it alive, Europe will survive the times of slamming the doors. O, I didn't want to mention the >Brexit<. But if you leave, consider this: It might change the weather for many years. As Bill Withers predicted in his blues:

*Ain't no sunshine when she's gone.  
It's not warm when she's away.  
Ain't no sunshine when she's gone  
and she's always gone too long  
anytime she goes away.*

Amén

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<sup>2</sup> All things mentioned are up to be debated. Nowadays people can recite the negative list to most of these steps. And they are right for it is part of the truth. Unfortunately they lose the positive list, like the slogan of the press: Only bad news are good news. And sitting on a heap of wonderful achievements they look down on everything in disgust – like a jury looks down on criminals, feeling good by feeling bad. And lose half of the truth.

<sup>3</sup> We should not expect human “saviours”.. “*Even the best of the people are but people at best... we pray that the Lord will give us leaders of His Grace and not the ones we deserve*”, James Mildred, in “Do we expect too much?”, evangelicals now, June 2019, page 5.