

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 2025
SERMON:
SERMON SERIES PART 3: WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?
SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:1-21
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Acts 2:1-21

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? **9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15** These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

- 18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
- 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
- 20 The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
- 21 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Sermon: Speaking from the Soul

This Pentecost Sunday, we conclude our three-part sermon series, *What is Discipleship?* This series is meant to prepare and equip you for our small groups, which begin today after worship, starting with the men.

I've asked you the last two weeks to approach these sessions thinking about your soul. How are you feeling? How is God moving in your life? What gives you hope, joy, meaning? I've asked you to use the space of the discipleship groups to move beyond the mechanics of "what needs to get done," such as watering the plants or getting to your weekly doctor's appointments. I've asked you to think of the discipleship groups not as "another task to complete," but instead, as a space that helps all the tasks that need to be completed to be more manageable.

Last week, I explained that it's much easier to navigate a checklist than it is to dive into the messy variables of talking intimately about ourselves and what gives us hope, joy, meaning, and life. It's a lot easier to give a needy person a meal than it is to help them navigate why they can't obtain the income or capability to provide meals for themselves. Yet, Jesus consistently calls us to be those beacons of purpose, of vulnerability, of change and growth. He entrusts us with His sacred purpose of transforming souls even after He ascends into heaven and commissions us to go spread the Gospel in His name.

Today we're going to talk about the *why*. *Why is it so much harder to talk deeply about ourselves and God, than it is to complete a checklist of tasks?*

Our Pentecost story from Acts 2:1-21 answers this question for us. At Pentecost, the Disciples are commissioned by God with the authority to speak the Gospel in His name

to all peoples from all cultures and languages. They're blessed with the gift of tongues to go out and spread the word – to do the hard work of soul searching and fortifying that would normally be beyond their human limitations.

It probably would have been easier for the disciples to simply stick to Galilee, preaching the Word to fellow Galileans who understood their culture and language. People who are familiar with your colloquialisms and cultural habits are less likely to misunderstand, write you off, or judge you. Yet, the Holy Spirit opens the ability for the disciples to reach across language and cultural barriers so that misunderstanding and judgement aren't obstacles to spreading the word.

Because that's really the root of our apprehension to live deeply into the vulnerable conversations about our souls, isn't it? *We don't want to be misunderstood or judged.*

When we become vulnerable and lean into the deeper parts of ourselves, our intimate thoughts and feelings, and then share those thoughts and feelings with others – the scary part is how it will be received. There's nothing more important than our soul's relationship with God, and if someone judges or misunderstands our expression of that, the results can feel devastating.

I know I've personally worn my heart on my sleeve in a group that was meant to be safe, intimate, and growth oriented, only to have my soul crushed by embarrassment when I tried to share it.

When I was 16, I was involuntarily placed in a high-end rehab center in southern Arizona called Cottonwood before transferring to the long term facility in Louisiana that I've told you about before. Each week, we had "drama therapy," which I think was supposed to be similar to a discipleship group where we were meant to be thinking more deeply about ourselves and our relationships with others and with God. One week, we played a game where we stood in a line and were asked to step forward if a statement applied to us, such as: *Your parents are divorced (step forward)*. *You've gone hungry before (step forward)*. *You've questioned your sexuality (step forward)*.

I stepped forward—because, honestly, what teenager hasn't? Especially in a generation where identity questions are common. I'm now a straight, happily married woman, but I wasn't that clear at 16, especially while incarcerated in a place like that.

No one else stepped forward. And the other girls burst out laughing.

That moment taught me what many of you already know: giving your heart to others is risky. It's far easier to complete a checklist than to share your soul.

Handing someone your heart and watching them crush it in their hands is a very real and very human fear, and also the primary reason why it's so much harder to speak deeply about matters of the soul than it is to arrange volunteer schedules and resources. We humans are deeply afraid that someone is going to make fun of us for speaking the Word of the Spirit about the deepest places of our curiosities, fears, and wonders, just as the disciples are made fun of for speaking the words placed on their hearts by the Spirit so many years ago.

And that brings us to the closing promise of our Pentecost text. After the laughter, after the judgment, after the mocking of the disciples for speaking so openly and boldly in unfamiliar tongues—Peter stands up and proclaims these words from the prophet Joel: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Everyone.

That's the answer to the fear. That's the anchor when we worry about how others will respond to the most vulnerable parts of ourselves. That's the reassurance when we risk speaking with the boldness of the Spirit, even when it feels like our words might be mocked or misunderstood.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord—questioning or certain, joyful or broken, doubting or believing—*everyone* will be saved. God doesn't ask for perfect articulation or polished performance. God doesn't sort us into worthy and unworthy based on how well we present our hearts in a group setting. God simply responds to those who *call on Him*.

And that's what we're doing in these discipleship groups. We are not performing. We are not presenting. We are calling on God, together, to meet us where we really are—not where we pretend to be.

So today, as we begin these small group spaces, let us remember that we are stepping into something sacred. Not because we have all the right answers, but because the Spirit is with us. Because God has entrusted us with one another. And because when we speak from the depths of our hearts—even shakily, even clumsily—we are doing the work of discipleship. We are letting the Holy Spirit speak through us.

And we are trusting the promise: *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*.

Amen.