

Pentecost Today: Listening to the Spirit with Discernment

June 2025

By: Rev. Dr. Jessica Lugo Meléndez

Pentecost is far more than a liturgical date or a historical celebration. It is a continual affirmation that the Holy Spirit remains present, guiding, comforting, sending, and challenging the church through every generation. And yet, in our world saturated with voices, intense emotions, and false promises of spiritual power, **genuinely listening to the Holy Spirit has become one of our most significant challenges as the Christian church.**

In his book *No creas a todo espíritu* (*Do Not Believe Every Spirit*, 2022), theologian Justo L. González reminds us that not everything that appears spiritual comes from God. Drawing on 1 John 4:1, González stresses the urgent need to **discern the spirits**— a spiritual practice often neglected by communities hungry for visible experiences and instant gratification, yet lacking theological grounding and pastoral depth.

From my own hermeneutical lens, Pentecost offers us a profound key: the actual work of **the Spirit is not always loud or spectacular**. While Acts 2 describes a rushing wind and tongues of fire, the true miracle was not the noise, but the **mutual understanding** that took place. People from different nations and languages began to understand and listen to one another. The Spirit did not create chaos; it brought unity. It did not confuse; it clarified. It did not manipulate; it liberated.

We live in a time when emotion is often mistaken for revelation, charisma for spirituality, and volume for authority. In the midst of this, the Spirit continues to speak. But often, as in 1 Kings 19:12, it comes **in a gentle whisper**, a still, gentle voice that only the attentive soul can hear. To listen to the Spirit is also to live under its guidance. Pentecost is not only about spectacular gifts, but about **obedience** (John 14:15), **active faith** (Hebrews 11), **humble service** (Mark 10:45), **spiritual maturity** (Colossians 1:28), **bold mission** (Acts 1:8), and **prophetic voice** (Luke 4:18). These are the visible fruits of the divine breath.

We must be cautious and recognize that **the absence of discernment can lead us to confuse loudness with divine presence**. While God can act in powerful and surprising ways, the Spirit never contradicts the message of the Gospel of Jesus. The filter of love, humility, justice, and the truth of the Kingdom must measure every spiritual experience.

Pentecost, then, is a continuous invitation to a spiritual life that is profound, active, discerning, and courageous. It is not about chasing experiences or voices, but about **living under the direction of the Spirit** who shapes, sends, and renews. Now more than ever, we need communities that listen attentively, preach with clarity, and live with discernment. The Spirit is still speaking. The question remains: **Whom are we listening to—and what is being said? Let us listen to the Holy Spirit with discernment.**

Original Source:

Adapted and updated from the sermon “*En el silbo apacible*” (*In the Still, Small Voice*), preached by Rev. Lugo at Primera Iglesia Bautista de Canóvanas, June 2024.



Short Biography of Rev. Dr. Jessica Lugo: Educator, pastor, and administrator. She is the Executive Director of the Association for Hispanic Theological Education. An ordained minister with the American Baptist Churches, she brings over 25 years of leadership experience. Her work strengthens theological education both inside and beyond the classroom, and her passion is to equip emerging leaders within the Hispanic community by connecting churches and institutions.

