



SOUTHERN GOSPEL 21

Eliza Iles, a Southern woman from Dry Creek, Louisiana, in Belgian Congo circa 1922. Aunt Eliza is the second white hat from left. You can read her amazing 1920 journey from New York City to the Belgian Congo at www.creekbank.net/150

Nothing connects with a person quite like truth in their heart language.

It was a church service I'll always remember. Just like something out of the book of Acts. The worship is in full swing as we are ushered into the thatched roof open sided church. If you've never been in an African church, you cannot fully understand full swing.

There's was a radiant joy in their singing and clapping. In spite of the fact that a sizable number of the worshippers are refugees, the congregants sing joyfully at Faith Baptist Church in Nimule, South Sudan.

The singing ends, and a young pastor begins his sermon. I'm unsure of the language he's preaching in other than it's not English or Swahili. After two sentences, he stops.



A lady to his right translates. I have no idea what language she's using. As she finishes, a man on the far right speaks. I don't have a clue.

As another English speaker from the past said, "It's all Greek to me."

A fourth person, a young church leader, translates into something I understand—English.

As this quadraphonic sermon continues, we are told that the original speaker is preaching in Madi, the local language.

The woman on his right is translating into Sudanese Arabic. Arabic is widely used as the *Lingua Franca* or trade language of this region.

The next man is speaking Murle, the language of most of the refugees present.

I'm not sure if the English is only for our benefit or others in the crowd. South Sudan's official language is English.

Madi. Arabic. Murle. And English.

It's like the Book of Acts. Chapter 2.

Listeners are hearing the Gospel in their heart languages.

Nothing connects with a person quite like truth in their heart language.

My monolingual frustration at only being able to converse in one heart language (English) irritates me.

The sermon in four languages goes on (and on). I always remind my American preacher friends, "Remember that using a translator doubles the length of your sermon."

In this case, it's times 4. 4x.

Madi, then Arabic, Murle, and finally English.

Spoken by four South Sudanese.

The Gospel in four languages.

A real Southern Gospel Quartet.

The best kind of all.

I wonder what these folks would think of our American Southern Gospel Quartet music. I wonder what Southern Gospel Music lovers would think of the Full Swing African music I hear and experience each Sunday.