

Sermon Starter – Pentecost Sunday

I Will Pour Out My Spirit

Acts 2:1-21

One of the striking realities in the Acts 2 text is the freedom that comes with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. The “disorder” is so great that at least some of the pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem conclude that these first believers are drunk. They were wrong about the source of the freedom—but also right to realize something new was happening.

What the church gained from this Spirit-given freedom was amazing: the shattering of all kinds of religious and cultural stereotypes. “No matter how you look at it, Acts 2 shows a big God with a big word at work expanding out into a big world” (*Feasting on the Word*, year A, volume 3, p. 17).

The prophet Joel points to two realities that are a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit both long ago and right now: erasing of “disqualifications” due to age (old and young), gender (men and women), and social class (slave and free); and the reality that the Spirit’s gifts are given not just for the individual but for the body.

While the gift of tongues, prophecy, and the interpretation of tongues may not be as common in some of our congregations or in the early church, it’s worth asking ourselves whether we or our congregations know how, and are willing, to wait with expectation. Are we afraid to pray for spiritual gifts, either not believing they could be given or hesitant to trust the Holy Spirit to hold sway over us?

This story challenges all of us to recognize the Spirit’s presence and claim and use our “authentic voices, gifts, and skills with which to love and serve. However, we cheapen the Spirit and her gifts if we reduce them to dwelling exclusively within the *individual*” (*Feasting on the Word*, year A, volume 3, p. 18, emphasis added). God has poured out the Spirit not primarily for our private enjoyment but for the up-building and edifying of the body. So the question isn’t only “How will I respond to the call and gift of the Spirit?” but “How will we respond?”

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