

Sermon Reading: Acts 2:14-21

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.’

God Continues to Pour Out His Spirit

Many God-fearing Jews are in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost as it had come to be known by that time. It was their Harvest Festival where they present themselves at the temple and bring their first-fruit offerings to the Lord. It probably had started out as a pretty normal festival day. That is, until they hear the noise of a violent rushing wind. But where it came from and what it meant they did not know. When they go to investigate they are met with a strange sight. A group of people, who had been followers of this person called Jesus, with what looks like tongues of fire on top of their heads are speaking all of these people’s hometown languages. This diversified and multicultural group gathering from all over the known Roman world with their different nationalities and different languages wonder, “What is going on here?” These followers of Jesus are Galileans from the northern region of Israel speaking to them. How was it possible that they knew all of these different languages? And, yet, each of them hears the wonders of God in their own tongue and language. But there’s something else too. It may have been the way they carried themselves. Something about their actions, a lack of inhibition, extra confidence and maybe even an excitement had overtaken these people. It was like this message of God was the single most important thing for them to share. Amazing. Perplexing. Some are curious. Others assume these people are drunk. But what does this mean?

The followers of Jesus knew. They had been gathered together just as Jesus told them. It had been ten days since they saw Jesus taken up from them. Ten days they waited for Jesus to fulfill his promise. Then with signs of wind, flame, and languages they knew the Holy Spirit had been poured out. And just as Jesus commanded, they went out as witnesses.

But wasn't this a bit reckless? Only a month and a half ago the leaders of the Jews had arrested Jesus and handed him over to the Romans to be killed on the cross. Was it safe for these followers of Jesus now? Then you look at how they went about sharing the message. Where was the ministry plan? How could they be sure this was going to work? It didn't seem like they had the programs set up to bring the people in and keep them. It doesn't seem like they spent much time going over budget lines making sure offerings coming in would be enough. I mean, look at how reckless they were. What if someone in the crowd was living in a sin? What if someone had already been approached by one of the disciples? What if someone was a family member? And look, some people do reject the message! Wasn't that a waste of time? Some even assume these followers of Jesus must be drunk! Now their reputations were on the line. People could actually see they were excited about Jesus and what he had done for them. There was no going through motions and mumbling responses here. What else would people think? Reckless.

Then one of them stands up amongst them. Peter explains, **“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”** (Acts 2:14-16).

Filled with the Spirit Peter directs them back to the Old Testament. Reckless though it may seem, it wasn't just to whom the message would be shared, look at who God is going to use to share the message, **“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. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy”** (v.17-18).

Talk about reckless. God has no intentions of being careful on who he was going to pour out the Spirit. Doesn't matter the age. Doesn't matter the gender. Doesn't matter your station in life or status in society. Everybody will have the Spirit poured out on them!

Reckless. Wouldn't it make more sense to choose a few? Wouldn't that be more effective? One would think it makes better sense to use those people who have the education background. They would be able to speak the message more eloquently and, therefore, it would seem more effectively. Or, what about those people who are higher up in society? People look up to them. People are more likely to listen to them. Or, maybe perhaps, it's not just in society. What about the leaders in the church, the theologians. They already spend more time studying the Bible. Especially the ones we

pay to do this work; I mean, it's their job, isn't it? Leave it to those who are more outgoing and charismatic. People will like them more. Have them share this message.

Yes, when it comes to ministry, there is a place for planning. Our God is one of order not chaos. And as you continue reading in Acts, the New Testament church does just that. But, they also simply go and share the Good News. Yes, God does call some to be pastors, some to be teachers, some to be leaders, and some to other positions. At the same time he calls each of us to go, baptize, and teach. Yes, we want to be good managers of the gifts God gives to us. And, yes, God gives us all different talents to use. But too easily do we hide behind these instead of doing as God calls us to do and be his witnesses proclaiming the Good News. Too often we allow the "what-ifs" and "maybes" keep us from being bold in sharing the message with our lives.

And still God chooses to pour out His Spirit on you. If you want to talk about reckless, consider the context more closely. He pours out His Spirit on Peter who had denied knowing Jesus three times. He chooses people who scatter in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is arrested afraid to be seen with him. He gives his Spirit to a group of people who had rejected their Savior and crucified His own Son. He pours out his Spirit on people who had killed His prophets and messengers. The Spirit comes to a people who time and again turned their backs on God and cheated on Him with the false gods of neighboring countries. Keep going back in history to the tower of Babel. It was the people's rebellion against God that led to all these different languages that split up the nations. Go further back to the Garden of Eden. It was for those people, Adam and Eve, who ate from the one true tree and plunged God's perfect creation into sin and earth. And then there's people like you and I who persistently rebel and defy his will. And still God remains faithful to his promises. First, he sends His Son who serves for us. Second, He sends the one who makes Jesus' work your own. For mankind born in sin we are dead by nature. We cannot choose to come to God on our own let alone accept this message to be true. We are dead in sin! Go to a cemetery and see how much a dead person do. It cannot be by my own thinking or choosing. Even if God starts the work and leaves the rest to me, we would be lost.

And so Jesus pours out the Spirit, our Advocate, to convict the world of sin. By the Spirit we learn there is one way to be saved. And if someone does not believe that Jesus has lived, died, and rose for you for the forgiveness of your sins, their sins are still counted against them. They reject the payment, the one way to be saved; therefore, eternal pain and suffering in hell is deserved! The Spirit also does his alien work of convicting us in our sin too. He shows you the reality that you crucified Jesus on the cross. You didn't drive in the nails, but your sins condemned Jesus because he claims them as his own. You didn't force Jesus to be on that cross. But it was for you and your sins that he dies. Suffering and hell should be our payment and punishment. But Jesus paid the price for you and the Holy Spirit works to make this payment your own. Therefore, for Jesus' sake, sin is no longer held against you. You are right with God. With Jesus having returned to the Father we are assured that our relationship with God

is fixed. Jesus' perfection is your perfection and the Spirit works to convict us of righteousness. Now because Jesus is raised from the dead, judgement has already been served. The prince of this world, the devil, condemned. The devil's head is crushed. And he's judged you too. Jesus declares you, "Not guilty of sin," already at the cross. And it's that Holy Spirit who works so that you know, believe, and trust this to be true and your own.

But how do we know he is being poured out? In Acts his arrival comes with wind, fire, and languages. Those were signs to show this is a dawn of a new age. God doesn't use those today. But the Spirit continues to be poured out today as it was in Peter's day: the Word and Sacraments—Baptism and Lord's Supper. Could he work through other things if he chose to? Of course. But he doesn't. Forgiveness, being saved, it's not about you having a certain feeling or even your strength of faith. It's tied to something real and tangible. It's sealed to you in Baptism. You taste and see it in the Lord's Supper. You hear it in the spoken and read Word of God. It's through these means of grace that the Holy Spirit gathers us together from every nation as a community of God's holy ones washed in the blood of the Lamb. We are a communion of saints with the forgiveness of sins united as the Holy Christian Church who have been called out of the darkness of sin into Jesus' light.

Reckless. And still God pours out his Spirit so that, "**All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.**" No one can say Jesus is Lord, and therefore be saved, except by the Holy Spirit. It's that Spirit who creates a heart of faith and now he works through us and the sharing of the Word to pour out Spirit on more. When God's Word is shared it's going to work in some way. It's not our job to determine how it will be received. It's not our place to figure out what it might do. Instead we simply share and trust the Spirit will work as he promises. And we have evidence that he will. Look at the miracle of Pentecost where He changes timid followers of Jesus into bold proclaimers of Jesus' resurrection. Look at the miracle of you: a dead sinner, made alive in Christ, God's workmanship, filled with the Spirit to proclaim the good news with your life. Like the apostles in Act, be bold, confident even reckless with sharing the Good News. Of course we aren't saying disregard the truths of Scripture or play fast-and-loose with what we preach. Be reckless not letting the excuses get in the way of sharing the Good News. As God continues to pour out his Spirit we continue to pray, "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love." Amen.