

Filled with Possibility

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 06/09/19

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

Waunakee, WI

It's a wild, funny story that brings us together this day. The apostles of Jesus gather in Jerusalem and, without warning, there is a wild descend of the Holy Spirit from on high. And though they come from a wide variety of backgrounds, from many nations, and though they don't have that much in common – other than their faith – they speak and they hear in ways that they understand.

A crowd gathers out in the street. And the crowd does not understand. The crowd scoffs, "They are doing the same thing they did when Jesus was with them. They party and they drink!"

It's kind of a crazy idea, isn't it? That the church is accused of being inebriated?

What's it like to be drunk? I wouldn't know, of course...I'm clergy! But from what I've observed in others, to be drunk is essentially to be out of control – or at least to lose control of oneself. You are no longer responsible; you say things and do things that you wouldn't say and do if you were sober.

St. Peter says to the crowd, "We're not drunk. It's only ten in the morning."

But in an odd sort of way, Peter was wrong. There was, at Pentecost, a strange sort of "drunkenness," and it is also at the heart of the church.

When Peter quotes from the prophet Joel, he prophesies that ordinary people, young people without much education or experience, and old people with very little future will stand up and dream dreams and see visions and make stirring speeches. They will not let the despair and disorder of their world have the final word on what is going on.

Nov 8, 2018 Paradise fire

When the Holy Spirit descends, it may feel like the destruction of our well-known world, but it may be the birth pangs of a new world, the birth of a new community where young people and old people – the people who usually who generally are not listened to very well in our world – will speak up, will tell the world wide world about the coming of a NEW WORLD.

Jesus told them to wait until he bestowed upon them the same Holy Spirit that empowered Him. They can't get that Spirit on their own, by their own efforts. This group of people, so frightened, huddled behind closed doors, people who have been jolted since the death of Jesus; they people cannot see a future of their own devising. They've got to wait until God gives them a future.

And that's what happened on the day of Pentecost.

What a great story for a world where lots of people are paralyzed by fear, overwhelmed by chaos, hunkered down in their own private concerns.

When the crowd in the street, who attributed all of the commotion in the church that day to mere drunkenness, when that crowd asked Peter, "What shall we do?" it is illuminating. Although they do not know the whole story about Jesus and the church, they know enough to know it demands their action.

Just as the quiet, waiting church was shoved into action by the Holy Spirit, so these people out in the street are on the move. They repented, turned themselves around. They were baptized, making them apart of this new movement. Now they are marked people, now they are enjoined – just as we celebrated with our confirmands a couple of weeks ago – Sydney, Harlie, Calvin, and Colin – of a people who go forth and do as Jesus did.

Thus the church begins – from frightening vision, disruption, and bloody endings, to bright beginnings, a whole New World, and new family called the church.

Pentecost is the beginnings of a wildfire; a fire - a movement - ignited by God's Spirit that swept across the whole world, which we call the church.

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Members and friends of Crossroads Church: it is a sin for the church, or for this church, to hunker down as if nothing new has happened. The church was not created to be that stable, fixed resting place for an anxious culture. Rather we are to be a foretaste of a whole new age – a whole new style of life – the Kingdom of God.

For the church to be the church, we must be part of that breathless movement to keep up with the movements of the Holy Spirit. That's who we are. This is how we began and it's the only way we can continue as a church – to keep up with the promptings of God's Spirit.

What might our church be if we constantly kept ourselves more open and receptive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? Where might we be led and how much adventure might be restored to our practice of the Christian faith?

It's enough to make you drunk with the possibilities.