

**Num. 11:24** So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. <sup>25</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.

<sup>26</sup> Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. <sup>27</sup> And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." <sup>28</sup> And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" <sup>29</sup> But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!" <sup>30</sup> And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

**Acts 2:1** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." <sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup> But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup> Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> 'In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup> Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

June 4, 2017  
Pentecost

### **If All the Lord's People Had the Spirit!**

Numbers 11:24-30

Acts 2:1-18

As we start the summer travel season, this story from the book of Numbers is very timely. And if you travel with kids, the backstory building up to our reading is priceless. This takes place during the Exodus, Moses and the Israelites (hereafter referred to as "the kids") are in the wilderness and the kids are all whining and complaining. The food is boring, they're arguing with each other, they keep asking, "Are we there yet?" And they want *meat*. They're sick of manna and they want meat! Finally, Moses has had enough and yells, "Don't make me pull this caravan over!"

Not really. Instead, he starts complaining to God.

God, why are you doing this to me? What have I done to make you mad at me? Am I these people's mother? Did I give birth to them that you expect me nurse them all the way to the Promised Land? Where in the world am I supposed to find enough meat to give to all of them? They keep whining, "We want a Big Mac, we want a Big Mac," in the one place in the world where there's no McDonalds! If this is the way it's going to be the whole trip, just kill me now.

I've said something similar a few times when the kids were younger.

So God says, *Ok, I'll get you some help. Gather seventy of the elders of Israel – the wisest leaders – bring them to the tent of meeting* (which was a tent outside the camp where Moses went to get away from the kids...I mean, to talk with God). God says, *I'll take some of the Spirit I've given you and put it on them and they'll help you lead the people so you're not having to do it all yourself.* God also says to tell the kids to get ready to eat some meat. They want Big Macs, they're going to get Big Macs. Three meals a day for a month. They're going to eat Big Macs until they're sick of 'em. That'll teach them to moan and complain while I've freed them from slavery and am leading them to the Promised Land.

See what I mean? Travelling is hard. Even God gets a little testy.

So Moses gathers seventy elders at the tent of meeting in a scene that foreshadows the Pentecost story in Acts 2, the Spirit is given to the elders and they begin to prophesy. But Moses doesn't count heads to make sure all 70 are there. Turns out two elders named Eldad and Medad have not gone out to the tent of meeting. They're still back at the camp, so when the Spirit is given, Eldad and Medad begin to prophesy among the people, and the people of Israel, like the people of Jerusalem, are not sure what to make of all this. Moses' assistant, Joshua, doesn't like it one bit. He runs out to the tent of meeting and tells Moses what Eldad and Medad are doing and says, "Boss, you gotta make 'em stop!"

Moses says, "Are you worried they're trying to steal my thunder? *Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!*"

*Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!*

That's a pretty amazing statement because that's exactly what happens on the day of Pentecost. God puts the Holy Spirit on all the Lord's people and they begin to prophesy; they begin to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. And the Spirit remains on us, on every believer until this day.

*Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!*

This October marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation. On October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517, Martin Luther nailed a piece of paper to the door of the chapel in Wittenberg, Germany. That piece of paper contained ninety-five theses, or points, he wanted folks to discuss, he thought were wrong with the church. It sparked a series of events that culminated in the creation of the Protestant stream of Christianity. And among the most important ideas of this new stream of our faith is the concept of the *priesthood of all believers*, and this belief in the priesthood of all believers is based on this foreshadowing statement of Moses and comes to pass on Pentecost:

*Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!*

The same divine Spirit that was given to Moses and the seventy elders; the same divine Spirit that was given to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and all the prophets; the same divine Spirit that was in Jesus; that same divine Spirit has been given to every believer, to me, and to you – each one of you. It isn't just some who have received it. Not just ministers, or a few leaders, God's Spirit is within each one of us, equipping us to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. We are each one of us to be prophets and priests, bringing God's message of love to the world through our words and our actions.

These five young people who professed their faith in Jesus Christ this morning, they did so because the Holy Spirit has been working in them to give them faith. The people around them, parents, teachers,

youth advisors, and covenant partners have taught them because they have the Holy Spirit in them, and it has been working through them to nurture the faith they professed today. And the people who taught the faith to their parents and teachers and youth advisors had the Spirit in them.

It is the Spirit that leads us to live our faith in actions. Each confirmand and their covenant partner did a stewardship project, using \$10 they were given to share God's love with someone else. These "projects" are really prophecy – living out the message of God's love. And they make a difference in people's lives. One project was to invite a Syrian refugee mother and children to come and make cookies, have lunch, talk and share. That resulted in the Syrian family inviting them to come to their apartment to share a meal, and a friendship has developed. Needs have been identified, God's love is being declared in acts of love and hospitality.

*Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!*

I'm afraid sometimes we are more like the Israelites in the wilderness than we are the elders who prophesied, or the apostles who declared the message in ways everyone understood. We're often a lot better at sitting in the back seat complaining about being bored than we are about letting the Spirit guide us into acts of service that change people's lives and draw them closer to Jesus and to each other. We're often much better at asking when we're going to get there than we are at bringing the Promised Land a little closer with acts of love and kindness. We're often a lot better at getting mad at our brother or sister sitting beside us in the backseat than we are at forgiving and making peace with each other.

Can you imagine if you and I, each one of us took \$10 a month and used it to show God's love to someone, the difference it would make in this wilderness journey we are on, making our way to the Promised Land? Can you imagine if each one of us acknowledged that the Spirit is on us as it was on those first seventy in the wilderness, or those in Jerusalem at Pentecost, and began to speak and act like priests and prophets, how quickly the faith would be spread?

Have you ever heard of the 80/20 rule? Eighty percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the people. It's true in most organizations, and it's true every church. Twenty percent of the members do eighty percent of the work. The same people teach Sunday school, serve on committees, lead youth groups, fix meals, until they burn out. Like Moses complaining to God, they say, "You're killing me here," and they drop out.

God says, "Let me help you. I'm going to put my Spirit on all of you so nobody has to do too much."

Moses tells Joshua, *Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!*

Well, the Lord has put his Spirit on all of them; on all of us...100% of us, not just 20% of us. May we get out of the back seat and be prophets, allowing the Spirit we celebrate today to use us – 100% of us – to be the Body of Christ in the world.

Not only will the Promised Land get here a lot quicker,  
but we'll all enjoy the trip a lot more, as well.