

# **“Living the Spirit-filled Life”**

## **Meditation on Acts 2:1-21**

### **Pentecost 2016/MIPC**

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 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. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’*

*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. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:*

*“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.  
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.  
And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.  
The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.  
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

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It started with, “I like your dress.” That’s what I said to the little brown-

haired girl squirming on the bench in front of me on Saturday morning.

Jim and I were gathered with a crowd in a large gymnasium in Marshall, Minnesota, waiting for commencement to begin. Our youngest son, James, was graduating from Southwest Minnesota State University with a bachelor's degree in social work. I was happy for him and proud that he chose to stay in Minnesota on his own to finish his senior year of college when we moved to Florida last fall. But I was sad, too. We hadn't seen him since Christmas. And we were returning to Florida on Sunday. We would have 1 day and 1 night--a supper and a breakfast together--and that's all. It will probably be months before we see him again.

The little brown haired girl wore a sleeveless, flowered dress. She was about 6 or 7 years old. She methodically tapped the bottoms of 2 "Dixie" cups together, staring off with a glum expression.

The older woman sitting quietly beside her wore the traditional dress of her culture and the coverings of her faith. Another little brown haired girl--who looked about 3 --sitting on the other side of the woman was staring intently at the woman's phone.

She was playing some kind of a game. Turned out it was, "Hello Kitty Nail Salon." She rubbed her fingertips on the screen back and forth until bright color was filled in for each nail. Then she added Hello Kitty art.

"I love Hello Kitty!" I said and motioned to my Hello Kitty purse on the floor and my Hello Kitty phone cover. The little girls laughed and included me in their game after that, showing me every nail they filled in and every design they chose. They squealed with delight when they painted the nails a sparkly blue--and pointed to mine, some of which are sparkly blue. 😊

We laughed together. Then, I showed them photos of Hello Kitty Nail Art from Google. Excited, their voices grew louder. And a man dressed in

traditional garb, sitting next to the 3-year old girl, turned to the children and said something in a firm voice in a language I didn't know. But from his serious expression, I am pretty sure he was telling them to be quiet and sit still, cause that's what they did--for a minute or 2. ☺

The graduation exercises had begun. Then all the speeches. Then the graduates came walking in to "Pomp and Circumstance." And there was James!

Not long afterward, the little girls left the room with the man. I worried that maybe I got them into trouble. I shouldn't have worried. They had visited one of the vendors in the lobby. They came back carrying lip gloss with Disney's "Frozen" characters. I complimented them on their purchases and told them how grown up they looked with their lip gloss "makeovers."

They looked pleased with themselves.

The family left before the end of commencement. But before they left, the little brown haired girl of 6 or 7 turned to me suddenly and said very seriously, "Thank you for playing with me!"

"It was my pleasure," I said. "Thank **you!**"

As they walked away, I realized that my mood had lifted almost instantly with our Hello Kitty exchange. A breath of fresh air blew into our minds and hearts. As we left the gym, I thought about how the Spirit visits us each day, comforting, teaching and guiding us in big and small ways that we might not even notice. I hadn't planned on reaching out with the love and joy of Jesus Christ that day. I only thought of my own and my family's needs and desires. But the Spirit used me, anyway, because it's always with me, even if I forget. It led me to reach out to a little brown haired girl from a different culture. Because the Spirit won't stop working in us to do the reconciling work of the Lord until that Great Day when Jesus returns for His Church.

Something stirred my heart to speak to her--not to tell her that Jesus loved her, perhaps, but to show Jesus' love with a simple, encouraging word.

The healing conversation started with, "I like your dress."

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My experience with the Spirit at commencement was but a glimmer of what the followers of Jesus Christ experienced in Acts 2; 120 of Christ's followers gather in a house in Jerusalem to pray and wait on the Spirit, as Jesus told them to do. The followers include Mary, the mother of Jesus, Jesus' brothers and the original 12 disciples except for Judas Iscariot; Matthias was chosen to take Judas' place. We don't know what kind of a house it was or if it was the upstairs room mentioned in the first chapter. It could possibly have been the Temple as that is referred to as a "house--" the house of God. The problem is they were "sitting together"; they didn't usually sit when they worshiped in the Temple.

"Pentecost," by the way, is Greek for "50<sup>th</sup> day." Pentecost falls 50 days after Passover and is a pilgrimage festival called "Shavuot" in Hebrew or "Feast of *Weeks*." It marks the giving of the 10 commandments to Moses, and the book of Ruth is traditionally read.

So Jerusalem is crowded with "devout" pilgrims coming from the diaspora to worship the Lord and be with God's people. Here are some of the places mentioned. Is it "every nation" in the whole world? Not quite. Scholars say the language points to the future fulfillment of the Great Commission in Matthew.

And what of this "sound ... like the rush of a violent wind"? This wind--or what sounded like a fierce wind-- enables every person to hear the message of the Risen Christ in his or her native language, though it was preached by

Jesus' disciples from Galilee, who couldn't possibly know that many languages. This fulfills Old Testament prophesy of Joel 2:28-32 that Peter quotes beginning at verse 17 and the promise of resurrection for Israel in Ezekiel 37:13-14: "<sup>13</sup>And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup>I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live..."

But even though every person hears and understands, not everyone believes. Some are amazed and others "sneer," accusing them of being "filled with new wine." New wine hasn't had time to begin turning to vinegar and the alcoholic content is at its height. Here is a 1<sup>st</sup> century wine pressing trough in Jerusalem. Peter responds to the scoffers, "Drunk? We're not drunk. It's only 9 o'clock in the morning!" Don't you love that? This is Peter, who didn't always say the right things. It's like he's saying, "Well, we could be drunk--if it were later in the day!" But this is Peter, powered by the Spirit. Suddenly he is eloquent and bold, preaching his first sermon from verse 14 to 39. He doesn't hold back, despite the fact that what happened to Jesus could easily happen to him. In verse 36, Peter declares, "Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

When many of the people heard this, they were "cut to the heart" and asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter answers, in verse 38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Three thousand were added to the Church that day-- all because of the power of God flowing out in response to Christ's followers faithful gathering for prayer, anticipating the coming of the Lord.

The promise of the Spirit-filled life is in vs. 21, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But the Spirit that dwells within us is for God’s work and not just for our own well-being, not just for our own salvation. The Spirit came, will come, and is already here because the Lord wants to draw all people to Himself. And the Spirit won’t stop working until Christ in all His glory returns for His Church.

So let us keep on calling on the name of the Lord--crying out to Him together, and following God’s voice in our Spirit-filled lives. May we be as bold as Peter. May we allow God to use us. May we be stirred to share the message of God’s mercy and grace with the world--not just with our words, but with acts of kindness and love.

The life-changing conversation may begin with a simple encouraging word to a little brown-haired girl sitting in front of you.

“I like your dress.”

Let us pray.

Holy Spirit, fall afresh on us. Renew us. Transform us. Make us into the image of Jesus Christ. Change our hearts and minds so that we aren’t always just thinking of ourselves, but that we are concerned for the wellbeing of the world that doesn’t yet know your love, mercy and grace. Stir us to reach out with love and kindness to people outside our familiar, comfortable circles of friends and family. Move us to share your grace with people of different cultures, languages and faiths. Draw us to gather for prayer, like the apostles long ago, and wait expectantly for the Great Day of the Lord, when Jesus, in all His glory, returns for His Church. In his name we pray. Amen.