

Day of Pentecost
Reformation, Media
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On Mother's Day Linda and I went to her sister Bonnie's for dinner. It was the first Mother's Day since their mother had died, and Bonnie wanted to have us over, along with her daughter, Linda's son and his family and Bonnie's boyfriend Jay. It was a pleasant evening with conversation, a nice meal and some wine. The next day Linda is talking to Bonnie, and Bonnie is telling her about how much Jay enjoyed me – She said, "He never knew that Larry had such a good sense of humor – all of those one-liners." Well, . . . Then Linda said, "I told her 'Sure, you had a couple of touts under your belt.'" And I said, "what do you mean? I always have a good sense of humor." "Honey, you know that you always loosen up a bit after a couple of glasses of wine."

I understand Peter's protest here in this lesson from Acts. "It's only 9 in the morning, We're not drunk."

But I can understand the crowd's confusion. This group of disciples was acting in a peculiar way – babbling various languages, enthusiastic, contagiously happy. How else could you explain it? They must be drunk. You know the way it is when people have a little too much to drink. Some become sappy and mellow and feel like singing; others get quiet and pensive; and, some get more belligerent or aggressive. But, whatever the reaction, they become exaggerated. Sometimes a little of the spirits help us loosen up – overcome our hesitations, give us a boost of confidence.

And who can't use a boost now and then? The truth is, most of us have a deficit of some kind or other – not as socially competent as we would like to be, so a glass or two of liquid spirit gives us a boost. We are not as successful as we would like to be, so we give ourselves a little boost with a lifestyle that outspends our income. We are not accepted by a group of kids we admire or want to be part of, and so we use attention getting behaviors or do what they require of us to get a boost into their group.

So here are these disciples, ordinarily nice, cordial, everyday sort of people. Like all of us, they too had deficits in their lives that required a boost. They had fears about the future, worries about being labeled as followers of Jesus and all that might mean, including prison or even death; in fact, they were uncertain about just about everything. Then, all of a sudden they were exuberant, even boisterous in a way that defied explanation – other than that they were drunk. Well, Peter was right, they were not drunk – but at the same time, they were under the influence.

It had happened to them unexpectedly, crept up on them – the way an extra drink or two might do. It began as a stirring at first, like a breeze blowing over them, but then the stirring was in and through them and more like a wind. There was a burning sensation – not like Tabasco or heartburn – but a glow that came from the inside and spread a warmth through them, a fire, like the glow of first love.

The best Peter could do to describe it was to compare it to the vision of the prophet Joel, when young men would see visions and old men would dream dreams; when

sons and daughters – even male and female slaves would prophesy. For the Spirit of God was flowing through them and over them – giving them a boost so that fear fled; anxieties ceased; worries vanished; uncertainty disappeared; more than that - **confidence surged; joy abounded; enthusiasm reigned; purpose appeared** – and the people around them just did not know what to make of it. They must be drunk – No, but they had plenty of Spirit and were clearly under the influence.

When you think about it, we are all under the influence or something. And here's the question we have to ask ourselves. Since all of us have a variety of deficits – areas of life where we would like to do better or be better; since all of us have a variety of fears and worries – about being accepted by a certain group or having enough money in retirement or getting a job I would really enjoy and which would pay enough to live on; and since all of us have anxieties – whether it's a health issue or about the direction our kids are going or about how we can take care of parents – what we have to ask ourselves is what influence do we want to be under?

The world is continually encouraging us to be under the influence of their promised remedies – nips and tucks to look younger; cars and clothes to look sexier; diets and pills to be shapelier – and the TV shows and movies lift up the fruits of a lot of those spirits. It's amazing that even in St. Paul's day the fruits of the spirits of the world were so well known that he lists them for the Galatians: “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.”

(Gal. 5:19-21) That covers quite a few of our TV programs and movies. And, it also covers some of the stuff I find myself dealing with occasionally.

BUT There is another Spirit – and that’s what captured the hearts of the disciples and confounded the people of Jerusalem. They could not stop talking about what God had done to them and how different their lives had been since they met Jesus. I can almost hear them singing – I’m so glad Jesus lifted me; I’m so glad, Jesus lifted me, I’m so glad, Jesus lifted me, singing Glory Alleluia, Jesus lifted me – You don’t have limit singing only to music Sunday.

Under the influence of that Spirit Paul told the Galatians about other fruit that could be harvested in their lives: “the **fruit** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (Gal. 5:22-23)

Now, I don’t know about you, but I like to be around people who exhibit those kind of characteristics. In fact, most of the time when I see problems – whether it is in a family or in a group, or in a community or in our nation or the world – it’s because some of these fruits of God’s Spirit are in short supply, and the fruits of the spirit of the world are way too evident.

And I don’t know about you, but there are always some of those areas of the fruit of the Spirit that I need to strengthen and work on and there are some of the fruits of the spirit of the world that I am struggling to overcome. The longer I live, the harder I try,

the more I realize that I just can't do it by myself -- that's why they are called fruits of the Spirit. I need to keep reminding myself that God has promised to put God's own Spirit in me – at baptism – The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of joy and awe of God. That's why I come here – to be reminded of that gift, to get re-fueled for life in the world, to get a boost – a couple of toots of the Spirit.

In fact, I am praying for the day when people in our community are so astonished at our enthusiasm; so amazed by our babbling about how much God had done in our lives; so excited about how much we love being part of this congregation of followers of Jesus; so energized by opportunities to do ministry; so filled with the love of Jesus and so empowered by God that they shake their heads and say – what has happened to (names . . .) Are they drunk or something?

And those who know us will say – that's the way they get when they've had a couple of toots of the Spirit.

Amen.

There's a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place,
And I know that it's the Spirit of the Lord;
There are sweet expressions on each face,
And I know that it's the Spirit of the Lord.

Come Holy Spirit, Come heavenly dove,
Stay right here with us, filling us with your love.

And for these blessings, we lift our hearts in praise;
Without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived
When we shall leave this place.