

# ***Too Much Wine***

Acts 2:1-21

May 20, 2018

First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

*Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."*

Yep...one of my favorite passages of Scripture right there. Those followers of Jesus were accused of having too much wine. In other words, it was thought by some that they were drunk. This is followed by another one of my favorite Bible verses. Peter responded to that accusation by saying they were not drunk. And what was his proof for this? It was only nine in the morning. Makes me wonder what he might have said if it was nine in the evening.

We are familiar with the story of Babel. It is found in the eleventh chapter of Genesis. God created everything. God created humanity. We sinned. All who followed Adam and Eve were and are sinners. God's initial attempt to rid the world of sin was the flood. Noah and his family were the only folks around after the flood. But as long as there were people there was still sin. God dealt with the on-going sin issue by choosing Abraham and promising Abraham he would have many descendants and become a great nation. God made a covenant with Abraham. One of Abraham's many descendants was Jesus. In Jesus God dealt with sin. God forgave it...and continues to forgive.

Just before the calling of Abraham is found the Babel story. The whole world had one language and a common speech. They all decided to build a city with a tower that reached all the way to the heavens...where God was. They wanted to make a name for themselves. Sin was totally out of control. That is the root of sin. Adam and Eve were tempted to know as much as God knew. The people wanting to build the tower desired to be on the same level with God. Total arrogance...thinking too highly of ourselves.

Because the folks had a common language, they would be able to accomplish most anything. God knew this. So God thwarted their plan by confusing their speech. They stopped building. And this confusion of language resulted in the people being scattered all over.

Pentecost reversed Babel. First, people from all over were gathered in one place; they were in Jerusalem. Second, some kind of common language was given. What was spoken that day in Jerusalem was understood by all. Third, at Babel the people wanted to reach up and be on a level with God. At Pentecost, God came down; God came to be with the people in the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost came fifty days after Passover. Pentecost means fiftieth. It was another big Jewish festival. In the Old Testament it is referred to as the feast of weeks. It was called the feast of weeks because it came after a seven-week harvesting period. As during the Passover so it was during Pentecost that Jews from all over gathered in Jerusalem. It was because the people came from all over that there would have been many languages being spoken in the city that day.

Pentecost was also considered to be the anniversary of the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was a time when Jews renewed the covenant God made with Moses in the giving of the law.

Roughly ten days before this, Jesus told his disciples to sit tight there in Jerusalem. He told them the Holy Spirit was coming. We know from John's Gospel that Jesus had taught them much about the Holy Spirit. Just before he ascended Jesus told them they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came to them. They would be empowered to be witnesses...beginning in

Jerusalem and going all the way to the ends of the earth.

So the disciples—along with many others—waited and prayed. They were all in one place. We know what happened next. There was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind. Like a violent wind. Doesn't mean there was a violent wind. No one's hair was mussed...no bramble bushes rolling down the streets of Jerusalem. It was just that sound that filled their meeting space. That was followed by what appeared to be tongues of fire. This was what it appeared to be. No one's hair was singed. These tongues rested on each of them. Pretty awesome sound and sight. They were empowered to communicate the good news in ways that could be heard.

This is what the Holy Spirit does. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to proclaim the good news of the kingdom to a lost and hurting world...beginning in Chisago County. All through the book of Acts we read that the Holy Spirit directed and gave power to those who proclaimed the good news.

How that must have looked that Day of Pentecost. There was the accusation of inebriation. Of course. That very shy and nervous band of Jesus followers who huddled together in rooms...sometimes behind locked doors...well, suddenly they were not so scared anymore. They came out of their shells. They became quite uninhibited. Their tongues loosened up. They spoke boldly. It was like the Spirit was talking. What else could people conclude? They were filled with the Spirit, sure enough. But it was the Spirit of a holy vintage.

Jesus had promised the arrival of the Holy Spirit...the Counselor...the Comforter. Jesus said the Spirit would do many things. Of course, as we just read, the Spirit gives power to our witness. The Spirit also convicts of sin. The world talks about conscience. That is the work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides us into truth. On and on. But I would like to lift up a couple of other things the Spirit does.

First, the Spirit restores fractured community...another reversal of Babel. But the

Spirit also creates new community. Yes, the Spirit is the Spirit of unity. We cannot forget that.

This day is also considered the birthday of the Church. Let's not reduce that to a cliché. Remember that in Jerusalem that day it was all about the community of Moses...Moses giving the law and all that. Along comes the Holy Spirit. Brand new community. Church.

Perhaps you have heard the word "ecclesia" used to refer to the church or the fellowship of believers. It's a Greek word that appears over a hundred times in the New Testament. The word means "called out ones"...those who are called out. It was originally a political word used to describe an elected body of officials...those elected...those called out. Then people began using that word to describe the community of believers...those who are called out from this world.

Whatever. The Church is a community brought about by the Holy Spirit. This church—First United Methodist Church—is a community brought into existence by the Holy Spirit. Read the one hundred and sixty year history of this church, and you will see the Spirit at work.

The Holy Spirit created this community. We must celebrate this truth. And we must not let anything undo what the Holy Spirit brought into being.

Finally, the Spirit gives life where before there was none. Or, perhaps another way of saying this, the Holy Spirit gives new life.

John, chapter three, Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born from above...or born anew...born of the Spirit. Jesus talked about the wind blowing where it will...and the Spirit coming and giving new life. The words translated "spirit" and "wind" and "breath" are the same Greek word.

Another of my favorite Old Testament stories is found in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel. The valley of dry bones. God took Ezekiel to this valley. Ezekiel says that the valley was full of bones...and they were very dry. God

asked Ezekiel if Ezekiel thought the bones could live again. Ezekiel responded by saying only God knew the answer to that.

Ezekiel was then told to preach to the dry bones. Imagine that...preaching to dry bones. Ezekiel preached. The bones started reassembling into...well, into people. Ezekiel heard the rattling of bones. Flesh appeared on the bones. But there was no breath...no spirit. Ezekiel continued preaching. Breath entered those folks...breath from God. They came alive again.

The Holy Spirit...the very breath of God...gives us life...gives this community of faith life. We need to ask God to continue to breathe on us and in us. As the hymn says, "Breathe on me breath of God; fill me with life anew." Breathe on us breath of God; fill us with life anew.

The Holy Spirit creates community and then gives life. And when that community is fully alive...fully filled with the breath of God...you know what it might look like...?

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