

“Holy Conspiracy”
Acts 2:1-21
May 23, 2010

A few years ago, I attended a community service at the Church of God across from the elementary school, and there was a ladder sitting in the front of the sanctuary and I thought, “That’s odd. Why didn’t they get that out before the service?” Then, Bishop Hunt explained why it was there. He believed God told him to put that ladder in the sanctuary and he was using it in sermons – I guess as an object lesson. The ladder was still there because God had not told him take it out. I do believe that sometimes God gives us messages over and over again with the hopes that somewhere, sometime, something will click and we’ll get it. It has not been a ladder for me, but over the last few weeks, the message topic has been crystal clear - the Holy Spirit. Every scripture passage has pointed me towards the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is where prayer has taken me, and the Holy Spirit is where my own experience has taken me. So, I say, “Yay for Pentecost and its guest of honor!” I know this day will never achieve the fame of Easter or the glitz of Christmas, but it is the day when the Holy Spirit got all fired up and blew into this side of heaven as never before. It’s the day that the Holy Spirit joined forces with us and launched a conspiracy to take over the church and the world! Seriously.

Do you know what the word ‘conspire’ means? Originally, it meant to breathe together. So, let’s try it. Take a breath. Now, blow it out again. See, you have just launched a conspiracy. Do you hear the word “spirit” in there? It’s right in the middle – consSPIRacy - to be filled with the same spirit, enlivened by the same wind. So, a conspiracy is exactly what should happen in church when the Holy Spirit starts to seep in – that Spirit fires up the power in us to DO the work of the Gospel and to BE the Good News for all the world. That’s the conspiracy.

That is because of what the Holy Spirit is. I read a great description this week. It said that when Jesus let go of his last breath –that breath hovered in the air in front of him for a moment and then it was set loose on the earth. It was full of such passion and such life that it did not dissipate as so many breaths do. It grew. It grew in strength and in volume, until it was a mighty wind, which God sent wailing into an upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. God wanted to make sure that Jesus’ friends were the inheritors of Jesus’ breath, and it worked.

Here we are! It worked. So, imagine how intense and exciting that first Pentecost must have been. The disciples were waiting. Probably checking their watches every 5 seconds, nervously telling bad jokes, feeling a butterfly or two jump around in their tummies. Something was coming. They did not know exactly what to expect – with Jesus, there is always a little bit of the unknown, but something was coming. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the rest of Jerusalem was at a ‘partay’ celebrating Passover - the air just hummed with celebration. The disciples were so keyed up that they locked themselves away TOGETHER to wait. Eventually, they heard it - the sound in a distance - maybe like our train whistle – the sound of a holy tornado headed their way. Before any of them could take cover, that mighty wind whipped through the entire house, striking sparks that burst into flames over their heads, and they were filled with it. I mean, filled. Brimming over! Every one of them – filled with God’s breath, and the air that then came out of their mouths came in languages they did not know.

Like a performance hall full of instruments each one playing its own tune all at once. It was crazy – wild and crazy, so much so that passerby’s stuck their heads in the windows trying to see what was going on. Before the day was over that little church had grown from one hundred and twenty to more than three thousand! People’s lives were changed. Shy people

became bold, scared people became gutsy, lost people found direction. Disciples who did not believe they could even tie their sandals without Jesus broke loose – when they opened their mouths, out came HIS words. When they laid their hands on the sick, out came HIS healing power. They were doing things they had never seen anyone but him do, and there was so explanation for it other than this grand conspiracy and their willingness to breathe it in. The Holy Spirit entered into them as sure as it entered into Mary, the mother of Jesus, and for the same reason. It was time for God to be born again – not in one body this time but in a body of believers who would receive the breath of life from their Lord and pass it on.

We are a part of that. I know that these ‘out there’ Bible stories seem far removed from us. But, there is not a whole lot of difference between us today and those first disciples. We are also gathered together in one place. We also do not know what is coming. We are also just waiting. Maybe the only real difference between us and them is what we are waiting for – what ARE we waiting for? Lunch? The moment of truth when we see if my rowing machine pays off and I can get Jamie back up out of the water? Are we waiting for our afternoon nap? Are we waiting for the service to end? When we come to this place and we praise God and we pray and listen and we sing and we meet at the Lord’s Table, just what are we waiting for?

Those early disciples? They were waiting for God to turn their lives upside down. They WANTED it. I’ll tell you a secret. I’ve been here 5 years, so I can share secrets, just not any of yours! I want it too. I don’t want to wait anymore. I don’t want to be sensible anymore. I don’t want to ‘do business’ anymore. I want to see God’s spirit poured out upon all flesh here. I want to hear our sons and daughters prophesy. I want to see the visions of our young people and dream the dreams of our older people. I want to lead the conspiracy. I want it all.

So, yay for Pentecost! Today is the reminder that we have it all – right at our fingertips. You see, we’ve got two baptisms– two people coming forward who are ready to get wet in front of all of you so that they, too, can join the Holy conspiracy. It starts with baptism – remember that baptism symbolizes three things. Death to the old life. Burial of the old life. And, rising up filled with the Spirit! But, that is available to us every single day – the opportunity to rise up filled with the Spirit. What if we took that seriously? What would it be like if YOU recommitted to the conspiracy? What would your life be like? How would you spend your time and energy? What would happen if the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead became the driving force of our church? Do you believe God can do something like that? Do you believe God can do that in little Wilson’s Mills, North Carolina? Do you want to believe?

Here’s what I believe. I believe the coming of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the printed pages of the Bible. Call me a fanatic if you want, but I believe in a God whose holy wind still blows into people and churches, filling them with all kinds of power and sending them out to accomplish great things for God and for humanity. So, Jamie and Ariana, when we get into that water, THAT’s the Spirit who will meet us there. It’s not calm. It’s not routine. It’s not boring. So grab your flotation device, because this conspiracy has the power to turn your life upside down and make you do things like leave ladders standing around in a sanctuary and sometimes even crazier things than that – whispering prayers for your enemies, being kind to those who insult you, forgiving...wild things. Crazy things. Things you cannot do without a little divine fire burning on the inside. If that’s the Spirit you want, then we welcome you to the conspiracy. Today, you don’t have to wait anymore. Today, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.