

## A Holy Spirit Conspiracy

### *Acts 2: 1-12*

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.”

This is the day when we church people say that the Spirit is moving and groovin’ in our hearts. So in the spirit of inspiration, I’m going to give you all a few options on how you might respond to the Holy Spirit this morning:

You might be so inclined throughout the service to feel the Spirit moving in your heart. When you do you are free to allow the energy to rise through your chest, into your vocal chords, and flow out of your mouth as you, in the tradition of our African American sister and brothers, give an “Amen!” shout. Or maybe you feel the Spirit moving through your arms and legs. The body wants to dance, but the reality is that the body doesn’t quite move in the same way it once did. So I invite you to take a ribbon that is in your pew seat and make it dance in front of you. If you have any questions about how to do this, the children can show you how it is done. Or perhaps you are feeling the Spirit stirring in a different way. You might feel like shouting “Amen!” but some of us are a bit too introverted for that. We might want to wave a ribbon and make it dance, but it isn’t how our parents raised us to act in church. So I would invite you to just sit back and take in a nice deep breath. Fill the lungs and let the air out. There! You now have three options to respond to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on this Pentecost Sunday.

Did you know that you are a Spirit-inspired people? That is who you are! Look up the Latin root of the word for “inspire” and find it literally means to “breathe into.” When we experience something that is inspiring it *breathes into* us a hope or an affirmation or an image of what is possible. A few months ago, when you packaged 10,000 meals for the hungry, or a few weeks ago when the church came together for a funeral, hosting double the church’s capacity with grace and humility, they are inspiring images of what is possible as a people who are *breathed into* by the Spirit of God. Just as God *breathed into* the first humans after unearthing them from the red clay. Just as the Holy Spirit *breathed into* Mary, whose body would birth a savior. On Pentecost,

we remember that the Spirit *breathes into* all of us, giving her people Spirit-inspired gifts that will help transform our world into a more kind and loving place. A Spirit-inspired, *breathed into* people. That's who we are.

It all began when one-hundred and twenty disciples were moping around wondering what good they were without Jesus. When suddenly they hear a sound like a freight train headed straight at them. Before they get the chance to respond there is a rush of wind, bright flames, like miniature fireworks hovering over their heads. Their tongues unleashed as the Spirit breathes into them and out of their mouths come languages they have never spoken before. It becomes a cacophony of a ruckus, like a roomful of bagpipes, or twelve pipe organs all trying to play Anna Gotta Divita at the same time. There are people gathering from all over the place peeking in the windows wondering, "What in the world is going on in there?" Some of them are city folk sporting suits and nice party dresses; some are farmers from the countryside wearing overalls. There are some families pushing strollers and some older people in walkers and wheelchairs. All wondering what kind of party was happening inside. Instead, what they heard was the gospel being spoken directly to them in *their language*. In Spanish: "Dios estra con nosotros." In Arabic: "Allah maeana." In southern slang: "God's with us y'all!" The story doesn't mention it, but I imagine there were people sharing the good news in sign language and musical language, in poetic language and in dance or body language as well.

Before the day was over the church grew not only in numbers, but in virtue. People who were once scared became bold. Those who were on the margins were now brought into the middle. These mopey disciples of Jesus began displaying gifts they never knew lived inside of them. When they went out into the streets speaking, they began to sound a lot like Jesus did. When they ran into the uninsured who sat around the front doors of the hospitals, they touched them with the same healing tenderness Jesus had done. When they encountered those who had no home or place in the social system they opened their arms wider and wider. And you know what? It began to change the world. All by the inspiration of this windy-fiery-good news slinging Spirit. There is no explanation for it except God breathed that day and they inhaled. And those who were once trying to breathe on their own, began breathing together as one.

It makes me wonder how the church is breathing together these days. Did you know that the English compound word for breathing together is "conspire?" Just as the word *inspire* means "to breathe into," the word *conspire* means "to breathe together." So go ahead and take in a breath. Now let the air out. There! You have just launched a conspiracy. Whether we know it or not, when we gather to worship, the Holy Spirit swoops in us and around us, knitting us together through the songs we sing, the prayers we pray, the breath we breathe. It is through this simple act of our breathing together that we somehow become co-conspirators in the Spirit's birthing of something holy. If you've ever attended a Lamaze class, you understand the importance of breathing. Before Joy and I had our first child, I remember the instructor mentioning to those of us who were playing the supporting role, that the best way to encourage our partners throughout the process was to be intentional about breathing with them. When the contractions would come we would take in a deep breath, and then let the air out slowly together. We didn't know it at the time, but we were conspiring to bring a child into the world.

We see these breathing conspiracies in other places too. If you were to look at the sheet music in one of our choir member's binders, you will more than likely see pencil marks written above some of the words. They are the spots where they are supposed to be breathing together. They are co-conspirators of bringing a song to life. Or maybe you've been following along with the Ashley Elementary School mold problem. There is a call out for those in the entire community to come together on May 22<sup>nd</sup>—for some reason when blacks, Hispanics, Arabs, Asians and white folk are all gathered in the same place, our elected officials sit up straight in their chairs and become more attentive. Why? Because we are breathing together, and I bet they can smell the conspiracy swirling in the air. It does not mean we agree about every issue or that we are all going to respond to the Holy Spirit in the same way. But it does mean we are willing to inhale as God breathes us into oneness again and again.

At the end of the day the question for me is do we still believe in a God who acts like this? Do we still believe in a God who blows open closed doors and whose fire brings real heat that can melt away any division between us? If our answer is "yes" then we better buckle up because the Holy Spirit will inspire us beyond the boundaries of what we think is possible.

Spirit inspired. That's who we are. So go ahead and take in a breath. Now let the air out. Join the Holy Spirit Conspiracy, and just watch what happens next.