

## ***Not Boring, Not Bubbly* - Sermon Based on Acts 2:1-21**

by David Hindman on Sunday, June 12, 2011

Christians are boring and naïve. They live in a bubble surrounded by other like-minded people. Read the book *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity*. These are just two of the ways most young adults see us who are part of the church. It's a view shared by young people inside *and* outside the church. Not a very pretty picture.

It's a picture that doesn't match the story of the birth of the church on that first Pentecost Day in Jerusalem, either. It certainly isn't boring when a loud rushing, tornado-like wind blows through, tongues of fire erupt and backwater hicks from Nowhereville suddenly speak in foreign languages fluently, even without the benefit of the Rosetta Stone language program. These Christians create quite a scene. They attract a curious and perplexed crowd who don't quite know what to make of it all. Some are genuinely intrigued; others cynically dismiss these Christians as a bunch of drunks souped up on some new wine.

And these Christ followers are not staying in some safe protective bubble. Peter shouts out to silence the gathered crowd and when things calm down enough he launches into a sermon that must have been incredibly powerful. When he ends many onlookers are struck to the heart by his words. Three thousand of them are baptized on the spot. Whoa. Now the previously timid, frightened, cautious play

it safe Peter speaks boldly and from the heart about what God has done in Christ. This new bold disciple even dares to call out his listeners by saying they are responsible for Christ's death. What's happened? Well, Peter and the rest are drunk on new wine, but it is the new wine poured out by the Holy Spirit of God doing a new thing! The Holy Spirit's been unleashed on the disciples and on the world. It's a brand new day for all. The same Spirit that birthed the creation, and as a fiery column led a whole people from slavery to freedom through the sea, and gave speech to prophets through the centuries to speak boldly God's messages of judgment or mercy, and is a promised sign of God's future for the whole creation – that Spirit has exploded like wind and fire onto the scene. Peter's not boring - he speaks boldly to all – what's happening is the future breaking into the present. God's acting now to give birth to a new world, a new creation. This is a new day, a new beginning. And this power gift is for all who will receive it – young, old, men, women, near, far, friend, foe, all!

Whenever that same bold Spirit explodes in the world and in the church, that new day comes again. The creation God dreams draws one step closer. This Holy Spirit power and this vision of a new creation are not for the faint of heart or timid. It's not something that can be contained in a nice safe bubble. It keeps pushing us out into the street to tell what God is doing and pushes us out of our comfort zone into new places of mission and ministry to meet this wild and untamed God.

In the ancient Celtic Christianity of Britain a symbol of the Holy Spirit was the wild goose. To be a Christ follower open to the Holy Spirit's leading is to be on a wild goose chase. It's never boring; it's never safe. But it's always wonderfully good.

On this Pentecost Day, some might look at our stately building and think boring people gather here to insulate themselves against the world's harsh winds and hide in a nice safe bubble. And they'd be so wrong. On this Pentecost Day we are caught up in a wild goose chase that keeps drawing us into the most unexpected and most thrilling places way outside our comfort zones. And that's great! Outside our comfort zones is where we're most likely to encounter the fiery powerful Holy Spirit of God who is our only comfort in life and in the world to come. In recent months that wild goose chase has led folks inside a prison to worship with our brothers in Christ, to regularly feed a hungry Jesus among the homeless at Monroe Park, to add some beauty to the lives of the special needs residents at Heart Havens, to play bingo with the lonely Jesus living at Ashland Convalescent Center, to work alongside the poor Jesus at Pathways in Petersburg. Nobody in their right mind would do such things. But when we seek the mind of Christ, we walk a different path and go places we never imagined.

And the Holy Spirit isn't finished with us. I think she's just getting warmed up. Next weekend 22 of our youth and adults travel to Tampa, Florida to spend a

week with Hispanic children in a Vacation Bible School. In a couple of weeks Ray Martin boards a plane to India to share his faith and professional skills on a dam project in that country. Next month Meghan, Julie and Susan join folks from Grace Church in Manassas in mission to Ukraine, once part of the Soviet Union. Now United Methodists share the life and love of Christ in new ways we couldn't imagine just 20 years ago. But the Holy Spirit brings such new creations to birth!

I hope and pray the Spirit blows across the life of someone here this morning. That wild goose chase could take someone to serve as mentor and buddy at All God's Children Camp. That Holy Spirit could call you to a child whose mom is in prison so they experience a week of safety, love and fun in the great outdoors. I long for all of us to be blown out of our comfort zone so we don't just talk about church as a great place to make friends and find a place to belong. Come Holy Spirit and bring us courage and boldness to begin speaking openly and boldly about our faith and how this is a community where the power and love of Christ are experienced full force. None of these things are boring. No one daring to venture out in such ways could ever be accused of living in a bubble. But the wild and fiery Holy Spirit does such things. So let the chase begin for some, and continue for others. Step out in faith boldly – God is already there waiting. We have an eternal promise it won't be boring, thanks be to God!