

Your Daughters Shall Prophesy

Acts 2:1-17

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." But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

It's tradition for churches to celebrate Confirmation on Pentecost. Why? It's all about the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost, we remember the story of the Spirit descending upon Peter and the other disciples. We celebrate this as the birth of the church. At Confirmation, we recognize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. So it's only natural to combine these two special events in the church.

Toward the end of our reading, after the disciples were accused of early-morning drunkenness, Peter refutes the critics. He says they are not drunk, but rather they are filled with the Holy Spirit. He recalls words from the Book of Joel, which affirm that "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." I'm not suggesting that we are in the last days. But when Jesus was raised from the dead, he did not leave us alone, but sent the Spirit to dwell with us. And today as we celebrate Confirmation, we have the opportunity to hear the prophetic voice of four of God's beloved daughters.

I like to assign my Confirmation students a final project that helps them to bring together everything they have learned and studied over the year. As in past years, this year's class was

invited to create their own Gospel. No, they didn't write out the life of Jesus in their own words. Instead, they compiled a CD that demonstrated their faith. To guide their selections, we used the words of our Confirmation Prayer. We all shared in this prayer this morning during the Opening Prayer. So the students had to find a song for each of these categories: Basic Faith, Good Character, Spiritual Understanding, Alert Discipline, Passionate Patience, Reverent Wonder, Warm Friendliness, and Generous Love. The students worked so hard on their projects, and shared such great insight into their faith through their musical choices, I'd like to share some of their work with you this morning. Though as promised to them, I will keep their words anonymous.

Basic faith is what forms the foundation of your faith. It's what you believe in and how you act upon that belief. It is the core of what we believe, a belief that doesn't require proof. Everyone has the right to have their own beliefs. Basic faith is really something that can't be defined, because it's different for everyone.

So what did these young women say was at the core of their faith? God exists. That's the most basic rule that there ever was and that there ever will be. All good gifts will be provided by God. God is always there, even when you give up on him. Even if you feel like giving up, God believes in you. It's doesn't matter what you've done, God is willing to forgive you. So love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. Also, love your neighbor as yourself.

Good character is simply about being a good person and doing the right thing. That doesn't sound difficult to achieve, but it really is. It shouldn't be about what you want, but what is best for the people around you. Even if it's hard. Even if you know that your parents won't

like it. Knowing that you might end up losing your life for what you believe in. You think about others before you think about yourself and you love the way God wants us to love.

Spiritual Understanding is basically knowing about God and God related things. It's knowing you need God. It's knowing God, not just through prayer, but all the way through. Overall, it is doing something spiritual, and not just doing it, but thinking about it, knowing why you're doing it, really wanting to do it, and having the faith that it is the right thing to do, even if it is difficult.

Alert discipline is having the focus to do spiritual practices. In class, we talked about how the means of grace are the way we come to know and understand God's love and presence. That can include praying, attending church, singing hymns, reading the Bible, and even fasting. Whatever you choose to do, you need to be obedient and vigilant in your commitment. It's not just going to church and zoning off, or going because your parents make you. You have to choose to do this on your own, and pay attention. It means that you have enough drive to take time out of your life to spend with God. I think alert discipline might be hard to master, but you shouldn't give up on your journey to achieve it.

Passionate patience is the willingness to wait for God – to realize that the things you wish for won't always happen, or they take a long time to happen. There's more in the world than just you. We must be passionate enough about God to have patience that he will come to us when the time is right. It means to wait until whatever happens, even if that means waiting an entire lifetime. You have to be totally and completely willing to wait, you're not just absently waiting. This isn't just "okay, I'll wait in the car for you to finish brushing your teeth." This is full, whole patience. It involves waiting without complaint and feeling so strongly about what

you're waiting for that you do it with great devotion and commitment. It means letting God make the decision that's best. It might not be exactly what we want, but things will work out.

Reverent wonder means that you are amazed by anything and everything natural, and have a churchy attitude toward everything natural. But it's not just something amazing; it's wonder that puts you in the mood to worship God. You also have a feeling of deep respect and love for something you hold sacred. It's being in awe of what God is. It's about being constantly amazed at the things he has created and the miracles he performs every day. It's something special and spectacular that each person has a different experience with.

Warm friendliness is all about doing good things for others. It is being kind to and accepting of others. You should be there for those you love, and even those you don't. It also involves being supportive, helpful, and ready to be a friend. Don't let yourself wreck other people's happiness, even if you're sad for yourself. Even though people in the world have their differences, we can come together and help other people in need. Everyone who's there for me needs someone to be there for them. And sometimes strangers need you too. Even if they aren't ever going to be there for you. So warm friendliness is doing something nice or good for others and not asking for anything in return.

Generous love is caring for other people. It means giving your love freely to others. It's also about being unselfish and willing to share all of the love you have. God wants you to love everyone and to care for them, just as he cares for you. Generous means that you have more to give than the normal amount of whatever it may be. Generous love means that you have an equal amount of love for anybody and everybody. There are no strings attached. Generous love also means giving your love without being dictated by what family, friends, and others think.

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” What does it mean to prophesy? It means to speak with divine inspiration. I don’t know if these are the last days. If I had to take a guess, I’d say probably not. But surely our daughters have spoken this morning with divine inspiration. They have given us a glimpse of God’s word for our lives. The words from our Confirmation prayer come from 2 Peter 1:3-11. He writes,

Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received! We were also given absolutely terrific promises to pass on to you – your tickets to participation in the life of God after you turned your back on a world corrupted by lust. So don’t lose a minute in building on what you’ve been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus. Without these qualities you can’t see what’s right before you, oblivious that your old sinful life has been wiped off the books. So friends, confirm God’s invitation to you, his choice of you. Don’t put it off; do it now. Do this, and you’ll have your life on a firm footing, the streets paved and the way wide open into the eternal kingdom of our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ.

These four young women, these daughters of the Most High God, are prepared to confirm God’s invitation to them in a special way this morning. But each of us must respond to God every day, continuing to choose a life of faith. May we all join this morning in renewing our commitment to God. Amen and amen.