



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

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Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

Pentecost Sunday: Acts 2:1-21 “Oh, he’s drunk.”

There is a scene in the 80’s comedy *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*, that I always think of when I read the Pentecost story from Acts 2. John Candy is driving a car with Steve Martin asleep. I don’t remember how they got in this predicament, but Candy is driving on the wrong side of a divided highway. Neither Martin or Candy realize anything is wrong when a car on the other side of the road tries to get their attention.

“You’re going the wrong way!” they shout.

Thinking that nothing is amiss, Candy says, “they must be drunk.” Still insistent, they keep shouting “You’re going the wrong way.”

Candy replies, “How would they know where we are going?” Dismissing the warnings from their fellow drivers, Candy and Martin’s car ends up careening directly at two semi-trucks heading straight for them. They narrowly miss catastrophe and they continue on their comical adventure.

“Forget it, they’re drunk.” Isn’t that often the way people respond to crisis? Maybe not in those exact words, but that is almost exactly what happens in our Pentecost story today in Acts. The Holy Spirit swept through the room of the apostles. There was a loud rushing wind. There were tongues of fire. Suddenly, the group of disciples were out in the public and speaking different languages. It was a cacophonous scene, and what was the response of some that were gathered? “Forget it, they’re drunk.”

Like Candy and Martin ignoring the warning of fellow drivers, the people who were witnessing the miraculous birth of the Church dismissed the signs that were in front of them. From all accounts, something big was happening, and all they could muster was annoyed dismissal. In the movie, this was done for comic effect. In Acts, it sets a stage for theological effect. And for us, it’s a reminder of a social phenomenon that is still at play.

When traumatic events happen—one of the most common ways people respond to them is denial. We create narratives in our minds that escape the trauma by building fictions that avoid it. The people witnessed an incredible thing happening. That this was an inbreaking of the Holy Spirit into the

world on a level never before witnessed was not something that made sense in their world. So they invented something that fit: “They’re just drunk.”

A global pandemic kills 6 million people in the world, 1 million in the US, disrupts global economies, and shakes our society’s foundations to the core. The explanation: it’s just the flu. A shooter opens fire in a classroom, with 21 total deaths, many of whom were small children. The explanation: it’s a mental health issue. An insurrection tries to overthrow a duly elected President and thwart the peaceful transition of power. The explanation: it was a peaceful protest. The American West has the worst drought in recorded history. The explanation: it’s just natural weather cycles.

Traumatic events have been taking place at an alarming rates, and we are told over and over again that we should just keep calm and carry on. There’s nothing to see here.

Then Peter stands and says, “No.” This isn’t something to ignore. No one was is drunk. This is a God moment. This is the Holy Spirit moving in ways that God had promised. He quotes the prophet Joel and reminds them all that God had promised that “Your sons and daughter will prophesy. Your young will see visions and your elders will dream dreams.”

While others are trying to ignore what is happening, Peter rises and declares that God is at work. He declares that the Spirit is moving, and that this moment is a chance to do something new.

This is our moment. We cannot pretend the trauma has not happened. We cannot ignore the signs of turmoil, social upheaval, and climate change. We must speak truth to the trauma that we have all experienced. We must acknowledge the grief, the fear, the uncertainty. Then we can take heart from the promises of God and know that in the mist of trauma the Spirit moves.

As a Church we will best move forward when we speak the truth, which includes the healing and transforming power of the Spirit. Not to ignore the past, but to speak truth and ascend through it.