

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY JUNE 9, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“What About Your Gift?”

Based on Acts 2:1-12

My mother tells the story of a beautiful lead crystal bowl that was given to my Great-Grandmother on her wedding day. It sat at a place of honour in the buffet, off in the parlor, always admired from a safe distance; rarely used, for fear of breaking or damaging. Then one day, many years later, when Great-Grandma was an elderly woman, there was a horrendous crash from the parlor. The coveted crystal bowl had shattered into a million pieces: time, vibrations of farm equipment, and atmospheric pressure taking its toll. The crystal bowl was no more.

I remember a very different wedding gift, given to my Grandmother, on her wedding day: a Royal Dalton tea cup and saucer. It sat with pride in my Grandmother's display case when she was a young bride, brought out of the cupboard when guests came to visit on Sunday afternoons. As the years went by, the saucer broke and was thrown away. The cup became chipped, the handle broke off, and the finish cracked with age. When I first saw it, it was

being used as a measuring cup in the giant bag of flour Grandma always had nearby, as she was constantly baking for family and friends who would drop by: fresh snowball buns, chocolate cookies, or apple pie. Until Grandma became too frail to cook for us, it was the only measuring cup I ever saw her use.

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ANOTHER, “WHAT
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MEAN?”

~ACTS 2:12

So I ask you.

Who made better use of their gift?

Everyone present at those mysterious and exhilarating events of Pentecost received a gift that day. That's part of what made the whole experience so difficult to understand. Not only were the:

“God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven,” (v5)

affected by these strange events: the in crowd, the Chosen People; but everyone else as well.

Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” (v12)

So I ask you.

What did the people of Pentecost do with their gift?

- Some would have returned home, and kept the story to themselves, not wanting to appear foolish or silly, or accused, as Peter had to defend later in the chapter, from drinking too much wine.
- Some would have passed the whole thing off as one of those strange moments in life better left alone, either afraid or unwilling to consider the possibilities of a living Spirit within them.
- Some would have hurried home to re-tell this incredible story, undaunted by those who called them fools; sharing the Good News when and where they could; preparing the way, perhaps, for the Apostles who would come later.

So I ask you.

What are you doing with your gift?

You to, have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Does your gift sit carefully in a place of honour, looked at from time to time, pulled off the shelf for Sunday mornings, Easter, or Christmas, with barely a smudge or fingerprint showing? Or is your gift well used, cracked and chipped, bruised and bumped, worn, yet not worn out?

And I ask you.

What are we as a church, doing with our gift?

It is easy, as people of faith, and as communities of faith, to become complacent. We hold tightly to the belief that the Spirit is at work in our lives and in our communities. This belief gives us the courage and tenacity to build our churches, establish our congregations, make our mark in the community. And when we get to a comfortable place, sometimes, we stop listening to, or leaning on, the Spirit as much as we did before.

But the world keeps on: moving on.

The needs of our communities keep changing. Just as we keep adapting to our family situations and circumstances.

Which means...

This amazing gift needs to keep moving around and changing too.

- What the Spirit helped you achieve in the past may

not be what the Spirit has in mind for you now.

- What the Spirit helped this congregation achieve in the past may not be what the Spirit has in mind for us now.
- If our gifts have a layer of dust on them, then it really is time to get them down off the shelf and freshen them up.
- Because a gift as great as the gift of the Holy Spirit, kept out of reach, so that no one, including yourself, or your community, can make use of it, is of no use to anyone.

So I ask you again.

What are you doing with your gift?

As you approach the table today, with its gifts of bread and juice, receive not only the refreshment and the forgiveness offered, but drink deeply of the gift of the Spirit which is ready to be shared. Come, let us gather at the table. The gifts are ready. Amen.