Acts 2:1-21

Day of Pentecost

June 3, 1990

When I plant my garden, the cron is all in a row. **Broccoli stands next to broccoli, onions swell only in the space I have chosen for onions.** On one side of my pear tree **mex** soon will blossom the d**aisys**, along the shed the fox gloves, in front of them the bachelor buttons. That is how my garden is planted.

But when God plants his fields and meadows, dandelions and corn flowers, queen annes lace and small sunflowers, grasses of every size and shape all grow together.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the Colorado rockies, above timberline where the land has never known plow nor mower. **Yellows and pinks and blues and purples, all growing together, none of the order that I demand of my plantings, yet a beauty beyond anything that I could produce.**

When we plant our churches, they look a lot like my garden. We gather with people like us, similar in education, in income, in race, in values. We are most comfortable that way. I offer classes to make sure that there will be likeness among us, to make sure that the corn does not get mixed up with the broccoli, the peas with the petunias.

But when God plants his church it goes like this:

A rush of a mighty wind, tongues aglow that the spirit might speak, then words, an outpouring of words. And they all heard them speak in their native languages. Not one language for one people, everyone lined up, the same, but as many languages as there were peoples, so that each heard what the spirit had to say. On that day of Pentecost the Lord was meeting his people where they were. Not uprooting them, transplanting them, not first asking them to learn his language, but speaking in theirs. All sorts of peoples, planted in all sorts of places would be his church.

Luke tells us that those who were there that day hearing in their own language were bewildered. He tells us that all were amazed and perplexed saying
"What does this mean?" And others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

For all of us who are straight row planters, beans here and corn over there kinds of persons, being bewildered and perplexed by the way God meets people where they are and names them his own. This one is a slave of alcohol, that one never has a good word to speak about anyone. Over there is a complainer, she is selfish, he is unreliable. The Lord says, out of this bunch of people, I am going to make my blossoming meadow.

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Now I who want my garden all in order think God should begin with some sort of entrance exams. Let's determine first whether these people meet a minimum standard of goodness. Let's set a standard for good deeds, for usefulness in the community of faith, a standard for financial contributions, a standard for being able to get along with people. But God sends his spirit into all sorts of people.

Some were abused as children, now passing on what they learned at their parents' hands. Some were bent and twisted by the hard blow of the death of a parent when they were young, scarred by growing up in a home where no one was free to love. Some were crushed by poverty, some have never known friends. There are as many stories as there are people gathered in the church of Jesus Christ, gathered by his spirit.

And some mocked saying, They are filled in with new wine.

Even the mockers were prophets on that day when God poured out his spirit on all flesh.

For Jesus had told a parable about himself: No one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins and the wine is lost, and so are the skins.

Jesus, his spirit were the new wine, the Jewish faith were in which God blessed the keepers of the law, the good, this was the old wineskin. On this
Pentecost day God was pouring his new wine into the world. Our human desire is to order what God was doing, to control it, the new wine would burst this old skin. God’s spirit would not be limited controlled, he would come to people where they are.

They were filled with new wine, but not drunk. The church of Jesus Christ is always filled with new wine, The Spirit of Jesus Christ. Jesus calls me to look at my neighbor and see the new wine in him. Not the scars and the bent and brokenness, but Jesus Spirit I am called to see.

Now by all of this, I do not mean to suggest that God intends to leave us bent, broken and twisted by our sin. Withered, dried up. As we repent, as he forgives us our sins, he brings forth from us his beautiful blossoms, his abundant good fruit. This his spirit, his forgiveness in Christ has power to do.

But as my Lord is working in you, and in me, he wants us to see what is possible through his spirit as we regard one another. If I see just your sin, I feel very hopeless about you. But if I regard you as one filled with the new wine that is the Holy Spirit, then I know that nothing will be impossible for God working in you.

Look at one another. God’s Spirit is working in these people you see. Never forget it.