

YOUR DAUGHTERS AND YOUR SONS

Acts 2.17-18, 39

Father's Day, June 18, 2017

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Acts 2.17-18, 39

The Pentecost story we started two weeks ago continues when Peter stands before the crowd and tries to explain that this incredible ability to communicate in each other's languages is not some strange by-product of being drunk – which is an odd accusation when you think about it because, in my experience, being drunk doesn't usually make one a better communicator; less inhibited maybe, but not very articulate. And Peter's defense is equally strange – that they couldn't possibly be drunk because it was only 9 o'clock in the morning. Instead, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,

and your sons and your daughters will prophesy,

your young ones will see visions,

and your elders will dream dreams.

Even upon those who are slaves or servants or the discounted,

both men and women,

in those days I will pour out my Spirit:

and they shall prophesy ...

And this promise is for you,

and for your children,

and for all those who are far off,

everyone whom God calls.

Musical reflection: "Your daughters and your sons," (Tommy Sands)
sung by Michael Stern

I have long suspected that Father's Day and Mother's Day aren't really about fathers and mothers.

They are about daughters and sons. Because not everyone is a father or a mother. But everyone is somebody's child.

And so we come to a day like this and sons and daughters are trying to make sense of their relationship to dad. They could be celebrating. They could be remembering. They could be coming to terms with the kind of father they didn't have and longing for the one they wish they did.

Today is really about daughters and sons.

And I know this because, when we were in high school, my sister and I were very busy. And one year we forgot Mother's Day. We did it once. And we never did it again because we became painfully aware that Mother's Day was really about what kind of son and daughter you are.

So it is fitting on this morning that we would continue this Pentecost story with its promise about sons and daughters: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out the Spirit on all flesh and your sons and your daughters will prophesy."

When I was memorizing this passage in Acts 2 on my way to becoming the Michigan State Bible Quiz Champion, it did occur to me that all the talk about what was coming in "the last days" seemed to ignore the fact that 2000 years ago Peter thought the "last days" were already here.

Right now is the culmination of history. And this ancient promise of a Hebrew prophet was being fulfilled *now* as your sons and daughters look at the world around them and see, not only the reality of what is going on, but have some vision about what it could be.

Pay attention, Peter says, to what your sons and your daughters have to say because what they see and what they imagine tell you something about where we are right now.

And that can be a challenge because what they have to tell us may demonstrate that the seeds we have been sowing are *not* the ones we intended to sow - seeds of freedom and justice and peace.

When our god-children were little and we would be driving them around in the car, I sometimes had to remind Patrick that they were in the car with us.

Because it turns, like the song says, that children may not obey but children will listen. And sometimes they would say back to us things we didn't really want them to hear.

Right now, sons and daughters are telling us what they see and what they imagine. And it is time for us to be paying attention to the seeds we have been sowing.

Now this promise from Peter and Joel includes that line about "your young ones seeing visions and your elders dreaming dreams."

So I am wondering this morning what are the dreams we are sowing right now?

I realize that sometimes the dreams parents have for their children can become expectations that can be painful and burdensome.

But I'm talking about the dreams we have for the world – dreams that are the seeds we are sowing into the next generation.

People sometimes ask me if it was my dad's dream that I would become a pastor. I never got the impression that it was. He knew how hard it was and I don't think he would ever wish that on anyone.

But my dad did sow a dream in me. At his funeral people would say things like: “You know, I’m a Methodist, but Pastor Phillips was always a pastor to me.” Or, “I’m Jewish, but Pastor Phillips was always a pastor to me.” Or “I don’t really know that I even believe in God, but that didn’t matter to Pastor Phillips, because he was always a pastor to me.”

And what I realized is that the dream my dad was sowing was not about *my* being a pastor or even *his* being a pastor but about a kind of community – as Dr. King would say, “a beloved community” - where people are welcomed and respected and loved no matter who they are.

My dad and I disagreed about a lot of things. But he sowed in me this dream of a place where love overflows the borders of who we are.

What are the dreams we are sowing in the world right now?

What are our sons and daughters seeing and imagining?

What is this generation saying back to us?

Because today – especially today -- if you hear that voice, do not harden your hearts. God says, “Right now I am pouring out my Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters are prophesying; your young people are seeing visions and your elders are dreaming dreams.”

Whatever you do, right now, if you hear their voices, please do not harden your hearts.