

TOO MUCH

Order of Service (bulletin)

<https://www.spiritofhope.ca/news-and-events>

Video (recorded live stream)

<https://www.youtube.com/@spiritofhopeunitedchurch791>

May 24, 2026

Pentecost

1st Corinthians 12:3-13

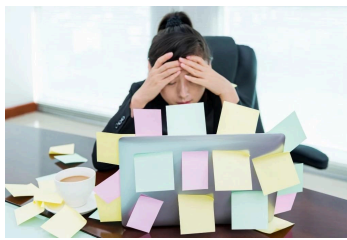
It is for this reason that I want you to understand that no one can be speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit and say, “Curse Jesus”; by the same token, no one can say, “Jesus Christ reigns supreme,” unless under the influence of the Holy Spirit. There is a variety of gifts, but always the same Spirit. There is a variety of ministries, but we serve the same One. There is a variety of outcomes, but the same God is working in all of them. To each person is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one, the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another, the word of knowledge through the same Spirit. Through the Spirit, one person receives faith; through the same Spirit, another is given the gift of healing; and still another, miraculous powers. Prophecy is given to one; to another, power to distinguish one spirit from another. One receives the gift of tongues; another, that of interpreting tongues. But it is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts and distributes them as she wills. The body is one, even though it has many parts; all the parts — many though they are — comprise a single body. And so it is with Christ. It was by one Spirit that all of us, whether we are Jews or Greeks, slaves or citizens, were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit

Acts 2:1-8,12-21

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they all met in one room. Suddenly they heard what sounded like a violent, rushing wind from heaven; the noise filled the entire house in which they were sitting. Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each one. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as she enabled them. Now they were devout people living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at the sound they all assembled. But they were bewildered to hear their native languages being spoken. They were amazed and astonished: “Surely all these people speaking are Galileans! How does it happen that each of us hears these words in our native tongue? ... All were amazed and disturbed. They asked each other, “What does this mean?” But others said mockingly, “They’ve drunk too much new wine.” Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd: “Women and men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem! Listen to what I have to say! These people are not drunk as you think — it's only nine

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o'clock in the morning! No, it's what Joel the prophet spoke of: 'In the days to come - it is our God who speaks - I will pour out my Spirit on all humankind. Your daughters and son will prophesy, your young people will see visions, and your elders will dream dreams. Even on the most insignificant of my people, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. And I will display wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below: blood, fire and billowing smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon will become blood before the coming of the great and sublime day of our God. And all who call upon the name of our God will be saved



The Greek word *gleukos* (γλεῦκος) usually refers to freshly squeezed grape juice, not juice that has taken time to be fermented into wine. But, at times, it can refer to a fully fermented, highly intoxicating wine with (as you might guess) a high sugar content.

In Acts, chapter 2, verse 13, *gleukos* is translated as “new wine”: the only place it is used this way in the New Testament. A better translation would be “sweet wine”. Strangely I only found a few English-language Bibles that did that.

- “New” implies that the wine was less alcoholic - maybe even barely alcoholic or non-alcoholic.
- Peter’s response - that the followers of Jesus were *not drunk as people thought* - makes the meaning in Acts 2:13 clear: *gleukos* (in this case) is wine that you can get drunk on.
- Now, Peter’s excuse that they couldn’t possibly be drunk because it was only nine in the morning is not really that convincing.
 - I am sure we all know of someone for whom 9am would be a perfectly normal time to have gotten into the wine cellar.
 - No judgment here.

What onlookers noticed in the streets of Jerusalem (during the spring wheat harvest festival) was not what they expected. Yes, festivals could be quite celebratory events, but this morning crowd was behaving differently than normal.

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- they were loud;
- they were (kindly) arguing with each other - several different opinions about what was going on were being expressed;
 - and these opinions were coming from the full range of pilgrim visitors: from every corner of the world;
- the onlookers noticed that this all seemed to have something to do with a group of *rather excited pilgrims* from Galilee *going on and on* about “God’s deeds of power”;

Clearly, something was fueling this frenzy – too much sweet wine was a logical conclusion.

“**Too Much**” seems to be an underlying theme to this story.

Ten days after the Risen Jesus’ final appearance with his disciples (a story we heard last Sunday), and about seven weeks after the events of Easter, the whole group of Jesus’ followers were back in Jerusalem for Shevu'ot (שְׁבוּעוֹת), the Festival of Weeks: also known in greek circles as Pentecost (as seven weeks is about fifty days - *penānta* (πενήντα) is the greek word for fifty).

- Shevu'ot was one of three *pilgrim festivals* when people (if they could) were expected to make the journey to the Jerusalem temple. The other *pilgrim festivals* were the Festival of Passover (just 49 days earlier) and the Festival of Booths (in the fall)
 - In the case of Shevu'ot, the purpose was to bring offerings of the first fruits of the wheat harvest.
- So, it makes sense that the city was packed with pilgrims from all over the known world.
- I can only imagine that the locals looked forward to the end of these big events: having that many tourists in town can be a bit much

The text tells us that the followers of Jesus were all together in a house when unexpected “things” started to happen... things that were heard, seen and felt:

- a sound like a loud rushing wind inside the house
- and what could only be described as several floating or dancing flames: also inside the house
 - one of these “flames” rested on every person in the room
- at the touch of these flames, each of them felt filled with the Holy Spirit, which gave them new language skills - this group of Galileans were now speaking in any number of other languages all at the same time (presumably some of them

were speaking known or recognizable languages and others in tongues not known)

- it was as if, the Spirit so filled them... that the impact could not be contained within one's self - it burst out in words

And if that was not too much, it seems that the house itself could not contain this experience as crowds began to gather and the followers of Jesus spilled out into the streets where things got really interesting.

- In the house, the text reads as if they were all speaking in *different* languages (other than Aramaic with a Galilean accent), but once in the street, people out there apparently heard them all speaking the *same* language
- weirder still, when the various people compared notes, they didn't agree on what language they were hearing:
- Amazed and astonished, people asked, "*Surely all these people speaking are Galileans! How does it happen that each of us hears these words in our native tongue?*"

This was all *too much* for the new people on the scene who wrote off all of the commotion as a gathering of early morning drunks.

And so Peter tried to make sense of it all.

- *Didn't the prophet Joel tell us that, one day, God would pour out God's Spirit so that all people would prophesy, and see visions, and dream dreams...*
- **All** people (young and old, male and female, slave and free)
- *That has to be what is happening here, Peter said.*
- *This is overflowing Spirit, not overflowing wine!*

The New Testament doesn't always do a perfect job of translating quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures, but in Acts, what author says that Peter said that Joel said is spot on:

- I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
- your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your elders shall dream dreams, and your young shall see visions.
- Even on the male and female slaves, in those days I will pour out my spirit.

Joel preached in very overarching ways: almost making it sound that everyone who has the Spirit poured out on them would prophesy *and* have dreams *and* have visions. But when the Apostle Paul wrote to the early church in Corinth, he spoke more about

how different spiritual gifts are embodied in different people – which together impacts the church as a whole.

- If we had kept reading in 1st Corinthians, chapter 12, we would have heard Paul make this point as clear as he could by using the metaphor of a body, whose different parts have unique purposes and how the whole body benefits from the variety of parts.

We can only imagine the pressure that would fall on someone if they are expected to live out every possible spiritual gift. That would be too much.

- So, I love that Paul teaches that the Spirit spreads the love around.
- In the Corinthians' context, he highlights nine unique spiritual gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, power to distinguish one spirit from another, gift of tongues and interpreting tongues.
- I don't see Paul's letter as an attempt to create an exhaustive list of spiritual gifts. He is most likely highlighting various gifts, ministries, and outcomes that he has noticed in Corinth or other early churches.
- In my decades of active, personal experience in the modern church, I have been blessed by others with other spiritual gifts that include:
 - the gift of hospitality
 - the gift of storytelling
 - gifts in various forms of art: music, movement, visible art through various mediums (painting, sculpture, fabric and more)
 - the gift of organizing and administering
 - the gift of gab and skills with the quill
 - the gift of baking and nourishing through shared meal times
 - the gift of making a good cup of coffee or pot of tea
 - the gift of inspiring and teaching others

What other gifts do you see being offered in the church?

- *[repeat any answers into the mic]*

And ***all of this*** is not a fulsome list!

Joel envisioned the Spirit pouring out on all people; Peter had a first hand experience of this during the festival of weeks, 50 days after first seeing Jesus as Risen Christ; and Paul encouraged an early church to not disparage people if their gifts are different than yours... but to embrace the gift of diversity in and of itself.

Importantly, Paul made no attempt to rank the gifts that he highlighted.

- In fact, Paul explicitly said over and over that it is the one God at work in all parts of the variety.
- and, also importantly, that the whole is made more complete by the interacting of gifts within a community.

I love that when I hear today's scripture passages

- that gifts can not be contained and must flow into their fullness in the midst of others
- that gifts (within community) are spread out so that no one has too much
 - and that we can release any expectation that we can do it all, all of the time

A message that I want to share today is one of my personal mottos that I try to live by

- *Do the best you can with what you've got!*

This is not only sage advice that was once given to me; it can be a tiny gift of wisdom I can offer to others (especially with my connections in the church)

To those people who are multi-gifted, a reminder that you have a finite amount of time and a finite amount of energy.

- And so, there will be times when we must choose between what gift we might live out - something not everyone is always good at;
 - We can feel an obligation to use all of our gifts if we see that there is a need that we can fill.
 - Some of the most talented and gifted people can burn out from giving too much if they are unable to balance the realities of life
- and those of us who benefit from those deeply committed and eager givers need to share our gifts of grace to allow them to not be over-giving (even if they are really good at the things we want and need)

Do the best you can with what you've got is not just advice for individuals; it is a motto for whole church communities to embrace as well

- embracing the gifts available to us is not to be based solely on trying to address certain needs and wants
- healthy gift-offering takes into account the capacity to fully make use of the potential available gifts
- This means in a healthy church (that has active and diverse people)... *good ideas* and *noble intentions* consistent with our vision, mission and values will need to

be set aside because

- our capacity to live into our potential gifts has limits
- there is only so much time, and energy, and space, and finances, etc.)

The goal is not to do everything, but to do the best we can with what we've got.

Some good news (gospel) for us today: as the United Church Creed professes...

- *we believe in God*
 - *who has created and is creating, and*
 - *who works in us and others by the Spirit*
- gifts are still emerging in us and among us

The Spirit did not pour out on all flesh just the once;

- The reality of who "all flesh" is dynamic and so I have to believe that the Spirit is still actively pouring
 - even on those who may have already been spiritually gifted in some way before
 - new gifts emerge within each of us all of the time.

Sometimes an existing gift can evolve and expand over time.

- what was once a minor gift can become major

This is gospel - Good News!

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Amen.

#375VU Spirit of Gentleness