

“The Pentecost Conspiracy”

May 23, 2010

Acts 2:Selected Verses

**Sermon preached by
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Bellefontaine, Ohio**

“The Pentecost Conspiracy?” Julie said to me this week when I told her the title of my sermon. *“That’s sounds like it could be a new Dan Brown novel, doesn’t it?”* And when I stopped and thought about it, I had to AGREE with her. When you think about the books one of the most popular authors of our time has written – Deception Point...Angels and Demons...The DaVinci Code...The Lost Symbol – *“The Pentecost Conspiracy”* could easily be the title of Dan Brown’s next book, couldn’t it!

After all, people love a good CONSPIRACY, now don’t they? At least I know I do. When I was in high school, I had the lead in my Senior Class play which was called Seven Days in May...about General J.G. “Juggs” Casey (who I played) and his CONSPIRACY to overthrow the government of the United States of America. It was a lot of fun and I had a great time playing the villain...the one who plotted and schemed and conspired with others in the military to topple the President and set MYSELF up as head of the nation.

The truth of the matter, however, was that while playing General J.G. Casey who was conspiring to overthrow the national government, I was ALSO in the midst of REAL LIFE CONSPIRACY with Jenny Brodie, who was our class president, and the rest of our class officers, to do an end-run around the high school administration in order to bring in a band for our Senior Class prom which the administration had said was simply too expensive.

Jenny and Mark Howell and Mike Davis and I, you see, were the class officers. And we had all been to Myrtle Beach on our Senior Class trip over Spring Break where we had heard a relatively unknown band out of Greenwood, South Carolina, called *The Swinging Medallions* play. And they were great...playing just the kind of southern beach music we all loved. And we decided right then and there we wanted to bring them in for our Senior Class prom. But the problem was that they cost about \$800 MORE than the administration told us we could spend on a band for prom.

WELL! Do you think THAT stopped us? Heavens NO! We just had to figure out a way to make it happen. And so confident were we that we could make it all work, we even BOOKED the band that very night...pooling together all our extra money that we hadn’t spent during Beach Week in order to pay the \$250 deposit and book the band for our May event!

But the problem THEN became – HOW WERE WE GOING TO PAY THEM? Well Jenny Brodie, our class president, (who, by the way, I had been in love with since the first grade!) and Mike Davis, our class treasurer, began to scheme. And pretty soon a plan was hatched and our “conspiracy” launched. We would “under report” the number of tickets we sold for our Senior Class play, skimming money off the top and setting it aside to pay the band in CASH the amount over and above what the High School Principal, Mr.Jewel, would let us spend.

Well, it all worked like a DREAM! Mike and Jenny cooked the books so successfully that our conspiracy was a SMASHING success! *The Swinging Medallions* played at our Senior Class Prom – right AFTER they had just released their one and only GREATEST HIT – *Double Shot of My Baby’s Love!* Everybody agreed it was the BEST Senior Prom EVER. And to this very day, Mr. Jewel NEVER found out! Nor did most of the rest of our Senior Class!

But what about you? When’s the last time YOU’VE been involved in a good CONSPIRACY?

Now the word CONSPIRACY, of course, means to plan...to plot – secretly...surreptitiously...behind the scenes...under the board – to commit an illegal or wrongful acts – such as in “to overthrow

government"...or skim money off the top of our Class Play receipts so as to be able to hire a band that was far too expensive for us to afford for our Senior Class Prom. It has a certain NEGATIVE aspect about it, doesn't it? A certain dishonest...prohibited...NAUGHTINESS to it. At our 20th Class reunion, Jenny and Mark and Mike and I just shook our heads in AMAZEMENT that we didn't get into some really BIG TIME trouble when we remembered our youthful high school "transgression." I shutter when I think of what COULD have happened if our "conspiracy" had been found out...and how it COULD have changed the very course of our lives. So join me in the keeping the "conspiracy" quiet, will you? Protect our secret and don't go calling Martinsville High School and telling them what happened at old Mavahi low these 41 years ago, OKAY?

But if a CONSPIRACY is about something illegal...or a secret plotting behind the scenes...then what does that illegal, secret, behind the scenes stuff have to do with PENTECOST? Was God CONSPIRING to do something ILLEGAL when God sent the Holy Spirit to those first believers there in Jerusalem? I don't THINK so? Was the Holy Spirit acting SECRETLY or BEHIND THE SCENES when it came in wind and with flame to Jesus' disciples and the others who were gathered together in that upper room? ABSOLUTELY NOT! The Holy Spirit's coming in power was QUITE evident and obvious for anybody with eyes to see and ears to hear...SO obvious, in fact, that it drew a tremendous crowd of bystanders who were extremely flabbergasted by it all and wanted to know what it all meant?

So WHAT GIVES? Why in God's good name are we talking about a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY today? AHH! Well! In order to understand what THIS Pentecost Conspiracy is all about, you got to know that while the word "conspiracy" can INDEED mean to "plot or plan for some illegal or wrongful purpose" – be it against the government...or against the church...or even against the high school administration – it can ALSO mean, quite simply, to BREATHE TOGETHER...as in to be filled with the Holy Spirit...the very BREATH of God...one with another and all with our Lord! Let me show you what I'm talking about.

The root of CONSPIRACY, of course, is to CONSPIRE. And while the prefix of CONSPIRE...which is CON...can, in fact, mean to be AGAINST something – as in to be "pro" or "con"...to be for or against something – CON can ALSO mean "together" or "with"...as in a CONvention – or the coming together of people for a common purpose...or a CONstillation – a grouping of stars...or a CONversation – which is two or more people talking together.

And the second part of that word – SPIRE...as in to CONSPIRE...actually finds its root meaning in the word for BREATH...which in the Bible is the very SAME word (in both the Old and New Testaments) as the word for SPIRIT...which is the very SAME word (in both the Old and new Testament) as the word for WIND...such that to CONSPIRE, in this instance, actually means to BREATHE together...to be FILLED WITH HOLY SPIRIT together...to experience the WIND of God...the BREATH of God...the SPIRIT of God TOGETHER. Which is EXACTLY what happened at Pentecost. All the believers EXPERIENCED GOD'S SPIRIT – TOGETHER! It was a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!!!

When the wind of God began to blow through the house were they are sitting, it was a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY! When the tongues of flame (a surefire symbol of the Holy Spirit if there ever was one) spread out and touched each person there, it was a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY! When they were all FILLED with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages such that the crowds gathered outside, who were from all over the known world at the time, could understand them, each in their own language, it was a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY! In other words, they were all BREATHING the Holy Spirit together! They were all EXPERIENCING the Holy Spirit together! They were all BEING FILLED with the Holy Spirit together! God, through the power and presence and gift of the Holy Spirit was bringing about a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY – in the very BEST sense of the word.

And yet, that's not ALL that word "CONSPIRACY" means...not when you really look at it. Because in addition to "breathing together," to CONSPIRE also means to JOIN or to ACT TOGETHER for a common purpose...a common purpose which, in no way, shape or form, needs to necessarily imply for some illegal...or suspicious...or wrongful purpose. It can be for a POSITIVE...or a GOOD...or a PRODUCTIVE as well – which was PRECISELY the case at Pentecost. The believers JOINED TOGETHER...ACTED together...CAME together through the power of the Holy Spirit to PRAISE GOD together...to PROCLAIM God's grace and mercy together...to witness to God's saving love for all people which came through Jesus Christ who is Lord.

In other words, on the day of Pentecost, a veritable CONSPIRACY happened! Followers of Christ – joined together by the power of the Holy Spirit – began working together toward a COMMON GOAL...which was nothing less than the proclaiming of God and God’s loving, saving, gracious plan and purpose in sending Jesus Christ into the world. And before the day of Pentecost was done, that new little struggling Christian community of 120 or so early believers had grown to more than THREE THOUSAND! And it has KEPT ON GROWING throughout the ages...right down to this very present moment when WE TOO become a part of the PENTECOST CONSPIRACY – when WE TOO come together through the power of the Holy Spirit to join our lives to the cause of praising God and spreading the Good News of God’s love for ALL people through Jesus Christ our Lord – all because God sent the Holy Spirit...God’s very BREATH...to breathe power...and purpose...and meaning...and LIFE into the church of Jesus Christ...AND into us!

Life in the body of Christ thriving and flourishing...blossoming and blooming. It’s a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!

Proclaiming the love...the grace...the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord! It’s a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!

Singing songs of praise to the glory of God...all with a common voice! It’s a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!

Children and adults learning and growing in the faith and building their lives upon the Word of God and the teachings of God’s Son. It’s a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!

New members joining...babies being baptized...the community of Christ’s followers growing day by day. It’s a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!

Different people from different places with different backgrounds, having different ideas and sometimes even speaking was seem to be different languages when we talk about our faith, all coming together to share our joy and our sorrows...our prayers and our celebrations...our rejoicings and our heartaches – knowing that we are not “out there, all alone” but that there is a community...a family...a fellowship of God’s people who stand with us and for us, holding us up in love and support...sometimes even when we are too weak to stand on our own. It’s a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!

Reaching out to God’s people...both near and far...to share the Good News of God’s love – not only through words, but through ACTIONS as well...through deeds of kindness and acts of mercy which speak far louder than words ever could. It’s a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!

Joining together at the table of our Lord, celebrating what it is we hold in COMMON rather than what it is that divides us apart. It’s a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY!

The Gospel being made known...Christian faith being proclaimed...joyous praise being sung...Christ’s table being shared...gracious forgiveness and love being lived. It’s ALL a PENTECOST CONSPIRACY! It’s ALL evidence of the Holy Spirit in our midst...PROOF that God BREATHES in OUR midst just as surely as God breathed into the community of believers in Jerusalem that FIRST Pentecost Sunday so long ago.

The result of it all? The result of the PENTECOST CONSPIRACY which is still going on in our midst after all these many years? The writer of Acts tells us:

Many miracles and wonders were done among the believers, and everyone was filled with praise!

The community of God’s people lived in harmony, one with another and all with the Lord!

The believers would share their gifts and offerings in order proclaim God’s love and help meet the needs of God’s people.

Sunday after Sunday, and often days in between, they would meet together as the Family of God’s people, sharing the Lord’s table together with glad and humble hearts and singing songs of praise to God.

And every day...EVERY day, the Lord CONTINUED to add blessing to their lives as Christ followers, through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:43-47 Paraphrased)

To GOD be the glory, the thanks and the praise for the gift of his breath-breathing, life giving Spirit which is STILL held out to us all in a Pentecost Conspiracy of love!

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