



It's that time of year again. If you haven't chemically treated your lawn chances are good that right now you have an abundant crop of beautiful little flowers called Dandelions. Did you know that up until the 1800's people pulled the grass out of their lawns to make room for dandelions which were used for food, medicine and dye for coloring? My, how things have changed! And when this little flower matures it is packed with reproductive potential. Each mature dandelion flower contains up to 150 seeds. It's been estimated that one acre of land could produce 240,000,000 dandelion seeds. That's amazing. But here's the deal: in order for a dandelion to be as productive as God created it to be, it requires a good strong breeze which can carry those seeds up to five miles where they can take root and grow.

Hold onto that image as I read today's scripture from Acts 2:1-13 [from The Message].

Jesus had loved his disciples and poured himself into their lives for three years. And after his resurrection he commissioned them to go out into the world and be his witnesses, telling others about God's love and forgiveness just as he did. Those disciples had incredible reproductive potential. But notice where they were at the start of today's reading – all together in a house behind closed doors. And did you notice what it took to set them loose? Did you notice what it took to release all that reproductive potential? Just like those dandelion seeds, it took a strong wind. But in this case that wind was the promised Holy Spirit.

Jesus had promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to them. He said that the Spirit would comfort them, guide them and empower them for their witness. And that's exactly what happened on the Day of Pentecost. The wind of the Spirit blew away their hesitancy and fears and inspired them boldness.

I can remember as a little boy, perhaps in first or second grade, there was a bully named Curt who terrorized our neighborhood. More than once Curt had chased me down, knocked me off my bike and threatened to thump me into next Thursday. And more than once I was so paralyzed by fear that I chose to play indoors and not go out and ride my bike. I remember once my mom asking me to ride my bike to the store to pick something up for her. I didn't want to go, afraid that Curt would be out and about. But my big brother, sensing my hesitancy, said, "I'll go with you." And suddenly I was fearless, because I knew that with my big brother by my side, Curt was the one who needed to be afraid!

I wonder if that's how it was for those disciples on the day of Pentecost. Suddenly, filled with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit the disciples' hesitancy and fear was transformed into boldness. Their silence was transformed into bold witness. They moved beyond those closed doors, went out the public square and declared the amazing things that God had done through Jesus the resurrected Lord. The enemies they feared – the religious leaders, the rejection of the people, their fear of failure – no longer seemed a threat now that the Spirit dwelled within them. And not only did the Spirit encourage them, it also empowered them in an extraordinary way. They were suddenly empowered to speak in the various languages of the pilgrims who filled the city of Jerusalem so that everyone, no matter who they were or where they were from, could hear the Good News of Jesus.

So, what does this story mean for us? To get at that I want to invite to think for a moment about a time in the recent past when you saw or sensed God's presence in your own life or somewhere in the world. When did you notice God at work in the world? Maybe it was an act of kindness. Maybe it was in the beauty of creation. When I do this exercise I find it helpful to ask myself, "When did I feel real joy or deep gratitude? When did I feel uncommonly alive?" Those are often clues to those moments when I've sensed God's presence. Take just a moment and think about a time when you noticed God's presence in the recent past. Go ahead. I'll wait.

Got something? Good! Now I want you to turn to someone sitting near you and I want you to share when you noticed God this past week. Now, before you do that I want you to notice what's going on inside of you. Chances are just got a little uncomfortable. You might even have broken out into a cold sweat. Pay attention to the thoughts running around in your mind at this moment. What if I embarrass myself? What if the other person thinks what I share is silly? I just want us to acknowledge that virtually all of us are feeling that way right now. It isn't just you. But I'm challenging you to push through your discomfort. Allow the Spirit to inspire you and blow away your fear. Now go ahead and take just 15 or 20 seconds to share with someone around you when you noticed God in the past week or so. [Give them a chance to do this]

As I look out on you today do you know I see? Incredible spiritual reproductive potential! I see people whose lives have been impacted by the love and forgiveness of Jesus. I see people who know what it means to be spiritually alive, and who hunger for even greater aliveness. I see people who allow the love of Jesus to move through them and into the lives of others through acts of mercy and generosity. Yes, I see incredible spiritual reproductive potential! And I suspect that the next step on the journey of becoming even more spiritually reproductive is to practice doing what you just did a moment ago: notice and share. Practice noticing God's presence in daily life, and sharing it with someone else. Start with the people you know and love and trust. See where God take you.

You see, like those disciples in today's scripture reading, you have a story to tell, a story of God's presence and work in the world. And like those disciples we have been commanded by God to go and tell. That's what disciples do. Practice noticing and you'll have many more stories to tell. And, like those disciples in today's scripture reading, we all struggle with fear, and so we keep our stories locked inside of us. Most of us have a dis-ease with sharing our story. We're afraid we'll be laughed at, rejected, or labeled a religious nut. But like those disciples in today's scripture reading we also have the Spirit, the Spirit of comfort and encouragement and power. And just as the Spirit gave those disciples the words they needed to share the Good News of Jesus, that same Spirit will equip and inspire us with simple words that point others to Jesus' presence in their lives. You don't need a degree in theology. You don't need to know every verse of the bible. You have a story and you have the Spirit. Your job is to notice and to share.

Any why does any of that matter? Why would we bother noticing and sharing? Aside from the fact that God has commanded it, I find two things happen when we notice and we share. First, it strengthens and deepens our faith. Practice this daily and you will become increasingly aware of God's constant presence and activity in the world and in your life. How cool is that? But second, there are people all around us, every day, who are hurting. They're struggling for a sense of purpose in life. They're sliding into the darkness of despair and they need a handle called hope to hold onto. When we notice and share, we subtly invite them to notice the One who is hope, the One who gives purpose and meaning to life. Noticing and sharing is how faith spreads and the Kingdom grows.

So, I challenge you to do that this week. Notice and share. Let the wind of the Spirit carry your story, like a dandelion seed, into the fertile soil of someone else's life. And just watch what God grows.