

On the Verge of Chaos
Genesis 11:1-9
Acts 2:1-21

Living in chaos is difficult for most people. We prefer things to be decent and in order, even if they are not perfect. We at least want a sense that we have some control over a situation and that we can make valuable changes if need be. It is interesting then that the image of the Holy Spirit is anything but decent and in order. Rather the Holy Spirit is like a free bird, flying high, going where it wants and landing where it wills. The Holy Spirit reminds us of being on the verge of chaos and it is difficult for us to comprehend the work of the Spirit when we have to let go of control in order for the Spirit to be most effective.

We read in Genesis the story of the Tower of Babel. It seems that there was only one group of people with one language. They were content with their lives and lifted themselves up on a pedestal. So God, seeing their arrogance and contentment, scattered the people and confused their languages, thus creating multiple cultures so that these cultures might learn from one another.

The Tower of Babel story gives a picture of what it is like to think we are on top of the world—better than anyone or anything else. But God, wanting us to practice humility and not superiority, scattered people and gave them diversity and differing cultures. This diversity created a chaos that set into motion a new way of living, one that required extra effort and the need to trust God. In a sense, God toppled the tower down and leveled the playing field.

We then read in the book of Acts another moment of chaos—the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to the people like the rush of a violent wind and divided tongues, as of fire, appeared upon each person that was in that room. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages other than their own. Outsiders heard them speaking in their own native tongue and they were amazed. Here we have the Holy Spirit giving these persons of diverse cultures the ability to understand one another in their own languages. In a sense it is almost a reversal of the Tower of Babel, yet it is meant to have the same effect—to humble the people and make them trust God.

For centuries having lived with different cultures, some grew to think of themselves better than others. Yet through this indwelling of the Holy Spirit, everyone suddenly came to understand one another in their own languages. Again, the towers were toppled and the playing field was leveled.

The Holy Spirit, being the Advocate that Jesus has given us, is a powerful force that moves in its own chaotic rhythm. The more of the Spirit's chaos we allow room in our lives for, the more the Spirit will be allowed to guide our words and actions. But the more we try and control the Spirit, the less room we leave for the power of the Spirit to work in our lives. But allowing the Spirit's chaotic powers to fill and guide our lives means that we have to give up some of the control we like to keep in our lives.

There is a story of a young boy going to see his grandfather and was traveling by train. He took a seat beside a man who happened to be a seminary professor. The boy was reading a Sunday school take-home paper, and the professor thought he would have some fun with the boy, so he said, “Young man, if you can tell me something that God can do, I’ll give you a big shiny apple.”

Thoughtfully the boy replied, “Mister, if you can tell me something that God can’t do, I’ll give you a whole barrel of apples.”¹

It is easy to say we trust God, knowing that with God all things are possible, but it is hard to live like we trust God. It’s like the farmer who prays for rain, but doesn’t carry an umbrella; or a young woman who prays for sunshine but doesn’t pack her sunscreen.

The special Spirit filled day of Pentecost was possible because the disciples fully trusted that the Holy Spirit would bring power to their words of Good News. They made room in their hearts for the power of God and allowed the Spirit to fill their lives with a powerful chaos that fully demonstrated God’s love for others. It’s as if the more room they left for the Holy Spirit, the more the power of the Holy Spirit could be demonstrated through them.

The more we trust God, the more we will allow the Holy Spirit chaotic room in our lives. It’s almost ironic then, that what appears as chaos and lack of our control actually turns out to be fully controlled by God. God does not invite us to open up our lives to Him and then throw us into chaos. Rather once we have opened up our lives to what appears as chaos, God guides us to do God’s will. We know persons whom have let the power of the Holy Spirit into their lives by the way the Holy Spirit is manifest in their lives.

Those who are filled with the Spirit demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. These fruits are anything but chaotic! In fact they are very controlled, decent, and in order. But in order to get there we must let go of our need for complete control, and trust what ultimately seems chaotic and crazy.

How awesome is it that we can fully trust this crazy chaotic power that flows into our lives like a violent wind? How wonderful is it that by trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be filled with inner peace, quiet, and joy?

There is another story about a five-year-old kindergartner who was asked by his teacher, “Who would you like to be when you grow up?”

Instinctively, the little boy answered, “I want to be God!”²

While none of us would probably publicly admit it, who wouldn’t want to be God? But the fact is that we are not God, nor will we ever be God. But the Good News is that with the power of the Holy Spirit we can allow God to work through us, sharing love, peace, joy, and

¹ Michael E. Hodgin. *1002 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 2004. P. 156.

² *Ibid.* P. 305.

grace to all those around us. I pray that you will open up your life and allow the Spirit to work through you and be a blessing to others. Amen.

Prayer:

Gracious Lord,

Open our lives to allow room for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Grant that when we say we trust you we will also act like we trust you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.