

A couple of weeks ago I told you the worst joke ever. I was wrong, this one I am going to tell you is the worst joke ever. But I like it anyway. It brought a smile to my face, are you ready?

There is a farmer who brought his brother to see the psychiatrist. "My brother," he explained, "thinks he is a hen."

"Really?" said the psychiatrist, "and how long has he been thinking on those lines?"

"For about four months," replied the farmer.

"And you did nothing about it?"

"No, doctor."

"Well, why in the name of all that's reasonable didn't you bring him to see me sooner?"

"To tell you the truth, doctor, we needed the eggs."

This little tale brought a smile to my face. Someone was confused. Someone one was misunderstood. Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever been misunderstood? How did it make you feel?

In our scripture for today, the disciples learned what it was like to be misunderstood. They learned what it is like to be misrepresented. They had already gone through quite a lot in the previous weeks. They went from being excited to follow him into Jerusalem to the trauma of dealing with his sudden arrest and violent death. It caused them to fear for their lives, so they scattered.

Then they heard the news that Jesus was alive. Over the next couple of weeks they had a chance to see him and visit with him. Then, at Jesus' direction, they remained in the Upper Room, waiting, praying, looking for the hope that comes from God.

On the Day of Pentecost, God's spirit came upon them, they left their small group and went out into the community of Jerusalem

and began to preach. They began to witness to the love of God that had come upon them and descended on them.

It was a wondrous, chaotic event as the Spirit of God, touched them and spread out from them to the rest of that city. People were amazed. They saw something happening. They heard the disciples speaking in different languages witnessing to God's love. Don't you think that would be remarkable?

That is when the first misunderstandings occurred. Some who heard them preaching on that first morning said out loud, "Don't believe them, they are just drunk."

The disciples were misunderstood. Someone spoke disparagingly about them. Has that ever happened to you? How did it make you feel?

It has happened to me. When it happens to me that someone speaks disparagingly of me, I often find it hurtful. As hurt as I often feel, I am more saddened that someone would find it easier to speak about me than to me. I am more often saddened that what is said rarely resembles my understanding of what happened or is happening. But what saddens me most of all, is that when someone speaks negatively about me, how that hurts the work of the church.

In the Community of faith, we are to work together for the sake of God and God's Kingdom. But when misunderstandings occur and gossip begins to grow, it undercuts what can happen for good for God and for God's Kingdom.

When misunderstandings surrounded the disciples on that first day of Pentecost, they turned to God and lived out of that witness to God to name what they understood was happening. "We are not drunk as some suppose. We are filled with God's Spirit. In fact we are seeing the fulfillment of the presence of God in our midst as God is pouring out God's spirit upon us and this world."

**They were able to take a misunderstanding and turn it around by naming it and focusing on God.** If we are going to be empowered to work through misunderstandings, we need to be willing to name them. Then we need to be willing to focus on God for our lives, and living our lives faithfully.

When the disciples named the misunderstanding and refocused on God, remarkable things took place. 3,000 people listened to them and chose to follow Jesus Christ. When I look around at the ministry of this church, I see the spirit of God moving. I see lives being touched by God's grace. I hear the stories each week of children and youth touched by our ministries. I hear how our support of missions is making a difference in people's lives. I see and hear how our music program is bringing God's love and grace to the people of our church. God's spirit is alive and well in our midst.

When we choose to live for God, it makes a difference for us and for this world in which we live. Daniel Taylor, in his marvelous book, *Letters to My Children* tells of an experience he had in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Back in the day when teachers taught children to dance in school, the teacher then, would line up all the boys at the door of the classroom to choose their partners. Can you imagine what it must have been like to be one of the girls waiting to be chosen?

One girl, Mary, was always chosen last. Because of a childhood illness, one of her arms was drawn up and she had a bad leg. She wasn't really that pretty. She wasn't really that smart and she was often picked on. One day, the assistant teacher in Dan's class came up to him at church and said, "Dan, the next time we dance, I want you to choose Mary."

Dan couldn't believe it. He didn't want to choose Mary. He wanted to choose Shelley, or Doreen, or even Linda. But his teacher said, "Dan, I think it is what Jesus would do."

So, on the day of dance class, Dan at least hoped he would be last in line. But he wasn't. He was first in line. He writes . . .

The faces of the girls were turned toward me, some smiling. I looked at Mary and saw that she was only half-turned to the back of the room. (She knew no one would pick her first) . . . Mr. Jenkins said, "Okay, Dan - choose your partner!"

I remember feeling very far away. I heard my voice say, "I choose Mary."

Never was reluctant virtue so rewarded. I still see her face, undimmed in my memory. She lifted her head, and on her face, reddened with pleasure and surprise and embarrassment all at once, was the most genuine look of delight and even pride that I had ever seen, before or since. It was so pure that I had to look away, because I knew I didn't deserve it.

Mary came and took my arm, as we had been instructed, and she walked beside me, bad leg and all, just like a princess . . . and me? I felt the presence of God.

In that instance, I realized that I had been the one who was chosen. I was humbled and awed and touched.

When we choose to live for God, it makes a difference for us and for others.

It is true, we may find ourselves misunderstood at times. There may even be people who speak unfairly about us, or not truthfully about us. When that happens, may we be empowered to turn to God, to speak honestly about what is happening within us. May we remain empowered to live and act for God.

Amen