

Why am I wearing a bike helmet? Because it’s red?
Partly – but mostly because it conveys, “Look out!”
When the Spirit comes there is power, there is dislocation.

Imagine we’re all just praying, worshipping, and suddenly we hear a
sound like the rush of a violent wind? See flames all over the place?
That’s what happened that day – not actual wind or actual fire,
but the experience of them. But the power was actual.
With the coming of the Holy Spirit in this way, the Church was born.

And the first effect of this Spirit power was to fill the mouths of the disciples
with a language they did not know –
a Spirit language, the Spirit speaking through them.
Even more weirdly, this language was heard in many different languages –
each one heard it in their own tongue.

Everyone had the Good News about Jesus proclaimed to them
in a way they could understand. Woah! No one was excluded.

This was a big tip-off to those apostles:

This Jesus thing God is up to is waaaaay bigger than you thought.
Peter got up and preached – “Hey folks, we’re not drunk. It’s only 9 in the morning!
What’s happened is the Spirit has got hold of us – and you too.
This means that what those prophets said generations ago has come to pass:
In those days I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh – on young women and young
men, on old women and old men, on people who are enslaved and those who are
enslavers. The Holy Spirit is for everybody! This is bigger than we thought!”

Of course, that wasn’t entirely news – Jesus had met people outside the
community of Israel. He’d realized this was bigger than he thought.
Before he ascended he told them to be witnesses to Jerusalem and Judea –
home town, home region; to Samaria – outsider territory;
and to the ends of the earth – everybody! And a little while after this
Pentecost event, they start meeting people beyond those boundaries.
We heard the story of Philip’s encounter with an Ethiopian government official –
he heard about Jesus and went back to start the church in Ethiopia.
This is bigger than they thought.

Then Peter was taking a nap one day and had a vision of being ordered to eat unclean foods – the Spirit is telling him: This is bigger than you think, buddy. The next moment, there's a knock on the door and he is asked to come to the home of a Roman centurion to talk about Jesus – that's a house full of non-Jews.

Normally, he wouldn't have gone... but he'd just had that vision, so he goes. And as he is proclaiming to them the Good News about Jesus, whoa, Nellie – the Holy Spirit comes in power upon those gentiles, just like at Pentecost, and they start speaking in tongues and prophesying too.

Peter and the guys with him are astonished – wait a minute, these guys aren't even baptized. They don't even know Jesus – how could the Spirit come on them? But friends, This is waaaay bigger than we thought.

Paul was a God-fearing Jew who thought this Jesus movement had to be stamped out – and on his way to arrest some Christ-followers, he has an experience of Jesus telling him his to stop persecuting him and take his message to the Gentiles. An enemy of the Gospel is to become an apostle of the Good News?

This is waaay bigger than you think.

Years later, when Paul has launched many communities of Christ-followers all over what is now Israel, Palestine, Syria, Greece, Turkey, Macedonia, he has to navigate some tension between the Jewish Christians at HQ in Jerusalem, who thought this promise was still for the Jews only, and these vibrant gentile churches.

He wrote a beautiful letter to churches around Ephesus, in what is now Turkey, about how they are now one in Christ, and he says this:

In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed ... by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephesians 3:5-6)

That's THE big secret of the ages, says Paul. Gentiles are fellow-heirs, sharers in the promise. Nobody can be excluded! This is waaay bigger than you think!

Paul told these gentile believers,

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:96-)

Members of the household of God! Imagine – you have no status and you're told you're a member of the family of the One who made the universe. There is no distinction – the Spirit of Christ is for everybody.

Who do you know who's been told they're outside God's promises?
Because of the language they speak, the color of their skin, their gender or
sexual orientation?

Because of the job they do, or because they have no job;

Because of where they live, or don't live?

Who do you avoid because you don't like their clothes or their tattoos
or their politics?

Tell them they are included, fellow-heirs with you of God's promise of life.

Better yet, invite the Spirit to tell them through you – don't try to do it alone.

This is waaaay bigger than we think – and through us, it'll keep on spreading.
Come, Holy Spirit!

Amen.