

Women's Day May 9, 2010 CMCC

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 2:17

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

This Sunday celebration was one of my mother's favorites. Rupert honored her as oldest mother and named me as oldest baby. This happened several years in a row and with beautiful flowers. Thank you Rupert.

Today we are celebrating and honoring not only mothers, but all women. How many of you here are daughters? How many are sons? We are, indeed a big family here at

CMCC. As one of the oldest women in the congregation, I am pleased to be one of the “grand-mas” of this Church family.

You know being “Old” is kind of fun. A woman can appear dignified and wise on the outside and just go on enjoying her youth and the little girl alive and active inside her heart.

I was waiting in the Vet’s office. His little girl (about 6), came up close to me and peered up into my face. In wide eyed wonder, she asked “Grandma, why are you so old?” When I regained my presence of mind, I answered, “Oh, it’s because God has given me a good long life.” That was my opportunity to witness to a family who did not know God. [WWW.women](#) in the Book of Acts.com has been fun to prepare. I’ve learned a lot. The three w’s stand for WITNESS, WILY, WILLY-NILLY . Who were the women?, what did they do?, where? Thank you Annette for asking me to speak today. I have enjoyed getting re-acquainted with some outstanding women and am grateful to share their lives with you.

In Acts 9:36-42 Luke tells the story of Tabitha (her name in Hebrew), sometimes called “Dorcas” her name in Greek. Acts 9:36 describes her as a disciple who was always doing good and helping the poor (Acts 9:36) When she became sick and died, Some of the disciples went to get Peter who was in Lydda near Joppa. Peter had prayed for a man, Aeneas who had been bed ridden many years. Peter said to him:”Jesus heals you” Get up and take your mat” The scripture says that all those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

The disciples must have had great confidence in Peter but remember that Peter didn’t claim special power within himself, he told the man, “Jesus heals you” When Peter went up to the woman’s room, he saw many women crying and showing all the things that Dorcas had made for them. Notice that he asked them to leave before he knelt to pray for Dorcas. The first thing he did was to kneel and pray. He spoke to her “Tabitha, get up” took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive.

The word spread and the scripture says that “many people believed in the Lord. The W word for this story is WITNESS. Many witnessed (saw with their own eyes) the miracle and therefore spoke and witnessed (as in “gave testimony”) to the power of God. Don’t you think that Dorcas told many people about how it felt to be raised by the power of

Christ? She was a witness. One writer has said that “you shall be my witnesses” is not only a PROMISE, OR PROPHECY but a COMMAND. Witness is the W word for Dorcas and should be for each of us.

The next “who” is Sapphira and her story occurred in Jerusalem.

What she did is shameful and I have never liked this story nor really understood it. This story is witness to the truthfulness and honesty of the author: Acts 4:32-37 tells how the believers were one in heart and mind. They shared everything and no one was in need. From time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles feet, and it was distributed to everyone in need. Acts 5:1-11 tells of a man named Ananias who with his wife, Sapphira, sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself but brought the rest and put it at the Apostles’ feet. Peter confronted him with his deceit, “You have not lied to man but to God” When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. When his wife Sapphira came in about three hours later,(she didn’t know what had happened), Peter asked her, “tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land? “Yes” she said, “that is the price.” “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also” At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. What does this story tell us? Sapphira and Ananias weren’t required to give everything to the common cause. One commentator reminds us that Ananias and Sapphira wanted the credit for sacrificial giving without making the sacrifice. Their pretending to give all was the sin. Jesus and His disciples were often more stern with “decent” sins than with sins of the flesh. It is a sobering thought that the severest punishment that occurred in the primitive church did not fall on a murderer or a thief. It fell on a “respectable” couple who falsified their church pledge in order to appear generous when they were really greedy” (Winn: p. 52, The Acts of the Apostles) My “W” word for Sapphira is “Wily’

third “Who” is a servant girl named Rhoda. What did she do? She was ruled by her heart instead of her head: Acts 12:12-17 Where? The home of Mary, Mother of John Mark In what some think is the traditional “Upper Room” or meeting place of believers in Jerusalem. Many believers were gathered in Mary’s house, praying. Peter had just escaped from prison through the help of an angel of the Lord. He stood at the gate or outer entrance and knocked (must have expected to be recaptured at any time)Rhoda,

the servant girl came to answer the door and when she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening Peter is at the door" "You're out of your mind" the disciples said..But Peter kept on knocking and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet, described how the Lord had brought him out of prison."Tell James and the brothers about this", he said, and then he left for another place. How many of us see ourselves in Rhoda..She was all Heart and not much Head. Think about how Peter must have felt as he knocked on the door, looking all around, expecting to be caught any moment....She must have felt so guilty when she realized that in her excitement, she left their beloved brother in Christ, standing in danger outside the door.

Someone has described Rhoda as " Love, out of harness" ...Love not directed, love for the sake of love. But what about those believers who were praying but wouldn't believe that their prayers had been answered? My daughter in law, Karen, reminded me that Rhoda got a second chance. What if Peter had been caught before she returned to the door? He didn't berate her,he just witnessed to the power of God and encouraged them with the miracle of his escape. Rhoda must have been convicted of her scatter brained reaction to the emergency but she wasn't condemned. Satan condemns. You completely lose heart when Satan condemns. Jesus convicts so that you still have the hope and will to know you can change, and you know you MUST change.. My "W" for Rhoda is "willy-nilly."

Lydia was a rich dealer in purple cloth.(Acts 16"11-15) Paul met her in Philippi (a district of Macedonia). She is described as a worshiper of God and with other women gathered by the river, probably to pray. She responded to Paul's message and was baptized. She invited them to her house saying: "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house" and they did! In Acts 16:40 Paul and Simon went to Lydia's house when they came out of prison. Lydia became an active disciple almost immediately. The W word for Lydia is WELCOMING

Priscilla and her husband Aquila were Jewish refugees from Rome and they like Paul, were tent makers. Paul lived and worked with them. They were also gifted teachers. They recognized the potential of a fervent, knowledgeable believer, Apollos. After receiving instruction from Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos "vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate proving from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ "(Acts 18:28)

Apollos came to know Jesus, not only as a figure in history but as a living presence. Priscilla and Aquila must have been inspired teachers. Their “W” words are Wise and Willing.

Let's don't forget Philip's 4 unmarried daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9)
Some thoughts on WWW.com: As Witnesses can we be wise but not wily? Filled with the Wonder of God's power, but not “willy-Nilly”?
The women of Acts live in this century, don't they?

I saw a photo many years ago of a tall, thin woman, in tattered clothes. There were two children, one on each side of her, clinging as if for protection. She was obviously poor and maybe from an African country. The caption underneath the picture read: SHE IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THEM (Proverbs 3: 18) It's hard to describe the feeling that overcame me. I saw protection, compassion, sacrifice, all in the woman's face and posture. The children were shy and afraid and probably hungry. But you knew that that woman was ready to give her life for those children and would give whatever food she could find to feed them. She was strong and brave because she knew she had to be....for them. In Proverbs, Wisdom is called “she” and is a tree of life for all of us. I think of many in our congregation who are trees of life:
We are sustained and strengthened by the “trees of life” in Acts and in our lives. Let us thank God for them.

Lord we thank you for the witness, wisdom and worshipping hearts of the women in Acts and in our lives today. Amen