***“Drink of One Spirit”*** by Stephen Finlan at The First Church, January 27, 2019

**1 Cor 12:4–13**

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.7To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.8To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits. . . . 11All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

12For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.13For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

**John 2:1–11**

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” 5His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” 6Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. 9When the steward tasted the water that had become wine . . . he called the bridegroom 10and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” 11Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

These Bible readings are very different, but they intersect at one obscure point. They both say something about drinking, and both seem to be have a subtle suggestion of the Eucharist, at least symbolically. Neither one has an *overt* link to the Last Supper or the Eucharist, but both offer some theological hints that point in that direction.

Let’s look at the gospel story first. The wedding celebration has run out of wine, but Jesus is indifferent to anything so mundane, and is irritated when his mother raises the problem to him. He says, more or less, “Why are you bothering me with this? My hour has not yet come.” He is focused on the time when his public mission will begin. The characters of Mary and Jesus are very clearly drawn in this story. Mary cares about the ordinary needs of the social group, while Jesus stays intensely focused on his mission. And despite Jesus’ impatient comeback, Mary knows that he will respond to the needs of the wedding party, and she tells the servants to be ready to obey any instruction he gives.

The story shows Mary’s kindness and cleverness as well, seen in her astute ability to read her son. It also shows Jesus’ seriousness and humanness, his impatience, but his willingness to do something special for his friends, and he works one of his most remarkable nature miracles. So what is the message to us? Does it imply, maybe, that God feeds us abundantly? Does it imply that Jesus cares even about our down to earth social needs? Or is it meant to say something about a certain wine that Jesus gives us? I don’t know the answer. One or more of these questions has a “yes” answer, but I don’t know which one or ones. I *do* know that Jesus enjoyed people who enjoyed ordinary pleasures, like parties.

Now let’s look at the other reading. It is all about the action of the Spirit within the believing community. Instead of social drinking, it has to do with social serving and loving. Paul says the Spirit bestows a variety of gifts, or “services,” but it is the “same God” and the “same Spirit” behind them all (1 Cor 12:4–6). To one person is given a gift of wisdom, to another the gift of faith, to another the gift of healing or of miracles, to another the gift of prophecy. “All these are activated by one and the same Spirit” (v. 11), he says, and makes an analogy to the human body, whose parts have different functions, but all belong to one body.

This stresses the idea of usefulness and unity, like the usefulness and coordination of hands and eyes. He finishes with: “We were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (v. 13).

Paul is obviously emphasizing the *spiritual unity* among different people with diverse spiritual gifts, and from various cultures, yet who all belong to the same spiritual body. It’s “one Spirit” he says three times (vv. 4, 11, 13), and “it is the same God” behind it all (v. 6).

For Paul, the Spirit is the believer’s pilot light and the cause of spiritual transformation. In other letters, he says the Spirit gives life, hope, and freedom from fear (Rom 8:11, 15, 24). And he says the “fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22–23).

Now the “spiritual drink” in 1 Corinthians 12 strongly suggests the Eucharist, since that’s where we share a drink with a spiritual *meaning*. The Eucharist for Paul stands for our connection with Jesus, and our unity with each other. In chapter 10 he calls it “a sharing in the body of Christ” and a partaking at the same table (1 Cor 10:16, 21). So the Eucharist is a sharing with Christ and with other. If A=C and B=C, then it seems that A should equal B, too. The drink of the Spirit that brings unity is also the wine of the Eucharist that brings unity.

And I think this reflects Jesus’ original intention in using the wine as a metaphor. It stands for the Spirit. Over and over again in the prophets we read that the Spirit is *poured out*; it is their most common image for the Spirit. Isaiah foretells a time when “a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field” (32:15). And some chapters later we read, “I will pour water on the thirsty land . . . I will pour my spirit upon your descendants” (44:3). So the Spirit is life-giving.

The prophet Zechariah has God say “I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (12:10). This Spirit, when it is taken in, transforms a person, bringing loving-kindness and prayerfulness.

In the prophet Joel, God says, “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . .Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28–29). Christians saw this prophecy fulfilled in the pouring out of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:17). Each felt the Spirit in his own way and up to his or her own capacity. Have you had a moment when you were empowered by the Spirit?

A Spirit that can be *poured* seems to picture a massive resource that can be given out to individuals or to a large number of people, in fact, the whole human race, and that is what happened on Pentecost. Jesus knew that his Spirit would work to heighten the motives of compassion and love of truth. “When the Spirit of Truth comes,” Jesus says, “he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). Further, “he will testify on my behalf” (John 15:26).

When you seek to follow the Spirit, you are also seeking to embody the prophetic values that Jesus lived and taught. And when we drink our Eucharist, we are affirming the unity that the Spirit can bring. We pause from the necessities of life and reconnect with the Spirit.

Whenever Christians seek to grasp at selfish power, they betray the Spirit of Truth, and delay the flowering of its potential. But when we take on *spiritual* power, that is, the power to *serve*, then we are guided and energized by the Spirit of Truth, and we receive our own spiritual gifts.

And who knows what may happen next? Because when a person unites with God, all things are possible.