

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

Faith and Fermentation

Amy Snow

Chaplain, Sioux Valley Hospital

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Text: Matthew 9 :14-17

Prayer for Illumination:

Our Divine Parent God, who waits up for us like a mother wondering where her teenager is at 3am, speak your Word to us today and let us have ears to hear. Amen

Faith and Fermentation

I had a friend in seminary named Rolf who told a great story about his brother. Rolf went to visit his brother who was living in a little hole in the wall apartment in Minneapolis somewhere. I can't remember Rolfe's brother's name so we'll call him Jake. Jake had gotten into beer making at some point and had been just terrible at it. But, as Jake was Norwegian Batchelor student he didn't feel it would be appropriate to throw the beer

away. Rolfe teased him about the beer sitting in cases, neatly bottled by the window next to the old steam radiator. When was he going to drink it? Jake opened a bottle and it hadn't gotten any better with time. It was down right terrible. And when you are a poor student there really isn't much beer that you won't drink- well this beer was it. You know it is horrible terrible beer when even poor students refuse to drink it. Well, sometime during Rolfe's visit, the weather turned colder and the super turned on the heat. In the middle of the night Rolfe and Jake awoke to noises that sounded like gunshots. "What kind of neighborhood are you living in???" Rolfe shouted. Then he realized that he was getting sprayed with this warm liquid and that it smelled like a brewery. Jake turned the lights on and they saw the tops bursting off of the beer bottles spraying the room with foam and really awful homemade beer.

Apparently the yeast was still active in the beer and the warmth of the radiator started the fermentation process all over again and with the bottles having been sealed the pressure built up until- Pop goes the homebrew.

Why am I telling you this story? Well, because I went to a small, private, religiously affiliated college and I feel confident that you could relate to a story about beer. But also because I wish someone had preached a sermon like this when I was in chapel, like you are today.

Faith and Fermentation have a lot in common. And I know that fermentation is a great way to understand the Kingdom of God- the real explosive and life changing power of the Holy Spirit. I understand that now better than I did in my college days.

I went to a small Presbyterian college, attended chapel, went to the “Youth Group” but it was a social thing. I also learned a bit about fermentation on Friday and Saturday nights. At the “Youth Group” I sang songs like “Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night... If will go Lord, if you lead me...” It was sort of like religious peer pressure. I tried it and without knowing, I planted the seeds for future addiction. I graduated from college with some business classes under my belt, fairly fluent in Chinese and I moved to Hong Kong to begin my career in international business. I was 21 years old, had an apartment in Hong Kong, worked for an American Electronics company, moonlighted as a bartender in one of the hottest nightclub districts and played rugby for fun. This is the life I wanted. But the addiction haunted me. That darn religious peer pressure, the Holy Spirit was out there stalking me.

It is a dangerous thing, inviting the Holy Spirit in. Annie LaMotte describes this phenomenon in her book, *Traveling Mercies*. She talks about Jesus waiting in a corner and following her around like a small-lost cat.

Waiting to be let in, but she says that she knew that Jesus, like the cat, would never leave once he was let inside.

It is like an infection. Bacteria enter the system and they can wait. Wait until you are weak or run down and then the bacteria multiply and take over and become a full blown infection. That is what happened to me. I was infected, I became addicted. Sure I fought it. Why would God want me? Go to seminary- me? That was more ludicrous than asking Jonah to go to Ninevah. I was not the type to sit around drinking Sprite playing Bible Trivia on Friday nights. Much less act like a Pastor. Forget that.

And here I am. I am an ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church! Holy Cow! And to push the envelope even farther God introduced me to this really cute guy in Hebrew class when I was in Seminary and I ended up married to a Pastor! Then I prayed for patience- I thought that was a good thing to pray for- now I am a mother of two five month old twins!

I tell you- Be careful messing with the Holy Spirit- it will turn you life upside down. You think you will be a hotshot international business woman and you end up in Sioux Falls, South Dakota praying with people before they have surgery. Watch out!

Fatih and Fermentation have a lot in common-You can't put new wine into old wineskins, and you can't sew new cloth onto an old garment. What is the point here? Well, you can't keep the caps on bottles of beer that are still fermenting- they pop off. When they make Champagne they add more yeast to the wine for a second fermentation and they have to put those little wire cages over the corks to keep them from popping off. And as the new wine ferments and ages, the old wineskin that has already stretched to its limit will burst. You need to use new skins that can stretch as the wine ages. You have to use pre-shrunk cloth to mend old garments or the patch will shrink and the garment will be in worse shape than before.

You can't put the Holy Spirit into your old self with your old bad habits- that old self will explode. The New Life in Christ grows and bubbles up inside and expands and will take over your life. The old self will burst apart as the power of the Holy Spirit builds up inside of you. Just like that bottle of awful beer- the top will pop off.

The Holy Spirit is like yeast- it infects your soul and won't let you rest until you belong fully to God. It spreads out until it encompasses your whole life. God will not be satisfied with just a bit of you, God wants your whole life. Not just a few years of mission work or a few years of Seminary- God wants it all. And like an addiction, God will take over whether you kick and

scream or whether you go willingly. God will spread through you like and infection and become like a fever in your brain- what you once thought you liked will no longer appeal to you. You won't recognize yourself in the mirror any longer.

I'm sure my 21 year old self would look at me and where I ended up and ask-“What in God's name happened to you?” Precisely.

So today I say to you, unless you are ready to give up your identity, your plans for your future, control of your life and everything you think you want, don't come to this communion table. Don't take the body and blood of Christ into your body. If you are not ready to lose control and end up wherever God wants to lead you, leave this place because it is dangerous. The old wineskin you know as your own self may eventually burst and become unrecognizable to you. If you aren't sure you are ready for a lifetime as a slave addicted to the Holy Spirit, don't sing “Be Thou My Vision”. Think about your life, and if you want to be the one in control, the one who makes the decisions, the one in charge, then this isn't the place for you. This is your fair warning.

Nobody warned me. I am unrecognizable to myself. I am not in control of my own life. I am not where I thought I wanted to be. God did this

to me when I invited the Holy Spirit into my heart. I was young and I didn't know any better.

Thanks be to God. Amen and Amen

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Guatemalan Gifts will be sold in the Commons on **Thurs., Nov. 18 & Fri., Nov. 19 from 9:00 am -2:00 pm.** Great time to do a little early Christmas shopping! We are looking for some workers for the booth for a few hour time slots. Please sign up on the sheet in the Narthex.

Operation Christmas Child—Get your friends together and pack a shoe box for a child in need. The 1200 W. 28th St. theme house is sponsoring a drive now through November 16th. Brochures are available at the commons desk and at the chapel table. Come with your items and join our house for a gift-wrapping party Thursday November 18th. We'll have shoe boxes and wrapping paper available.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

THURSDAY (11th) - Chair of Moral Values Student Panel (Ingrid Arneson, Andrea Halverson, Brian Smith, Jaci Sutton) 10 am, 3-1 room

FRIDAY (12th) - Worship, 10 am - Ben Loven, Senior Speaker

SUNDAY (14th) - Worship, 11 am - Fenecia Homan, Preacher

MONDAY (15th) - Worship, 10 am - Marty Dennis, Psych.

TUESDAY (16th) - Youth Ministry Support, 10 am - Chapel

WEDNESDAY (17th) - Holy Communion, 10 am - Pr. Marcia

Sietstra, Crestwood United Methodist; Senior Academy

FRIDAY (19th) - Worship, 10 am - Rita Von Seggern, Sr. Speaker