

The Blessing of the Bicycles



Whitsun Eve
Saturday May 18, 2024
Red Wing, Minnesota

The Blessing of the Bicycles

By the Quicker Vicar, Matthew Cole

Collect & Blessing

Vicar: Dearly beloved, I humbly pray and beseech you as many as are here present to accompany me with a glorious thirst and some ready cash unto the taverns of Wisconsin and grant further that we may hereafter lead a goodly, riotous and inebriate life to the glory of thy most perfect ride.

Congregation: Hear, hear!

Vicar: Remember Lord, that many of our bicycles have risen from the dead, much like yourself. Bless these our bikes, let not our hubs spew forth their gears, protect and shield our tyres from flats, let our cotter pins remain without blemish, save our thighs from unquenchable fire on the Maiden Rock Hill, and, though we are not worthy, in thy mercy protect us from undue headwinds. This we ask not for others' sake but for ourselves.

Congregation: Amen!

The Reading *(from Acts, Chapter 2)*

And when the Eve of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and from the northwest, too, which was handy, and it filled all the car park where they were waiting. And there appeared among them three speed bicycles and they gazed upon each of them.

And there were dwelling at Red Wing devout men out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came

together and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Bicyclists? Do they not ride three speed bicycles, great in age? Raleighs, and Dunelts, and Royal Enfields, and sometimes dwellers from Manitoba with their Sekines, from Angleterre, and Asia, Nottingham, and the parts of England about Sheffield? Do we not hear them speak in our tongues of their wonderful cycle works? And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

But Jon lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Minnesota, and all ye that dwell at Red Wing, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, excepting perhaps Geneva, seeing it is but the eighth hour of the day.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Jon and to the rest of the cyclists, Men and brethren, women and sisters, what shall we do? Then the Vicar did testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation! Sit at my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool! And many sold their possessions and goods, and parted their spare bikes out to all men, to everyone who had need and also to eBay and even Craigslist. And continuing daily with one Accord*, breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat and drink their beer with gladness and singleness of heart.

Here endeth the reading.

Congregation: Thank God!

* damn fine car it is, too.

Please join in singing...

The Hymn "Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"



Com - fort, com - fort ye my peo - ple, ride on Brooks thus saith our Jon
Hear is the cy - clist's voices cry - ing, On the high - way far and near,
Make ye straight what long was crook - ed, make the rough - er place - s plain;

5
com - fort those who sit on lea - ther, mourn - ing 'neath their bot - tom's load.
Break - ing in those brand new sad - dles, It on - ly takes about a year.
Leath - er seats will keep you hum - ble, as be - fits the end - less pain,

9
Ride ye to old - Wa - ba - sha on Brooks it feels near twice as far
Oh! That warn - ing cry o - bey! Proof - hide your seat be - fore to - day!
For the glo - ry of the Brooks, which you bought just for its looks,

12
Tell hin that my seat I cov - er, 'til the rain - fall now is o - ver
Let the val - leys rise to meet you, and the hills bow down to gre - et you.
And your flesh shall see the to - ken, that the seat is nev - er bro - ken.

The Psalm

Adapted from King James Bible, 23rd Psalm

Please read responsively

Vicar: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Congregation: He maketh me to lie down at lunchtime:
he leadeth me beside back waters.

Vicar: He restoreth my bike:

Congregation: he leadeth me in the bikepaths of righteousness for his
name's sake.

Vicar: Yea, though I ride through the valley of the Mississippi,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

Congregation: thy rod brakes and thy Dynohub™ they comfort me.

Vicar: Thou preparest a table before me in the ~~Eagle's Nest Coffee~~
~~shop~~ Harbor View Cafe:
thou anointest my chain with oil;

Congregation: now my chaincase runneth over.

Vicar: Surely goodness and Sturmeys
shall follow me all the days of my life:

Congregation: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Dismissal

Vicar: I lift up mine eyes unto the hills;

Congregation: from whence cometh my help?
(Psalm 121)

Vicar: Make straight roads for our feet,

Congregation: so that the feeble may not be turned out of the way, but may
be made strong.
(Hebrews 12:13)

Vicar: Remember that the Lord died for our sins.

All: So let's go sin a bit so that he didn't die in vain.
(my brother-in-law)

Vicar: Remember that life is short and we do not have much time
to gladden the hearts of others, so be swift to love, make
haste to be kind and go forth and ride with joy.

All: RAmen

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Service adapted by Matthew Cole, the Quicker Vicar.

What Would Jesus Ride?

Notes on Today's Service

Tomorrow is Pentecost, also known as Whitsunday, or White Sunday, so today is Whitsun Eve. Pentecost is 50 days after Easter and thus moves around year to year. In Christian tradition, Pentecost is when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and they began speaking in tongues, as alluded to in today's reading. In northern Europe it became a popular date for Baptisms. In Britain, the newly baptized would wear white robes, hence the name White Sunday, Whitsun. Also in Britain, Whitsun Ales (referring both to beer specifically and boisterous celebrations generally) were popular and involved boys and men getting drunk in the streets, young people dancing, bowling, and shooting their bows and otherwise carrying on with an enthusiasm more vigorous than the strictly religious celebration required. This was repressed by those humourless Puritans in 1603; after the Restoration, perhaps after those Puritans sailed off to Massachusetts to torture witches, Whitsun Ales revived in more modest form but declined with industrialization and the resulting commercial imperatives which destroyed so much social cohesion and leisure time. (The UK had 33 public holidays a year until 1834! Then it was pared down to 4 ☹). The remnants of the Ales eventually evolved into the village church fêtes that carry on in England to this day. And while fêtes may not involve as much shooting of bows as they used to, this is the traditional time for cheese rolling, bale throwing and Morris dancing. Hmm, maybe we should roll a cheese off Maiden Rock! It *is* Wisconsin, after all! Cheddar Ho!

British and Empire schools often used Christian holy day names for their terms. St. Andrews University had Michaelmas (September 29), Candlemas (February 2, Groundhog Day in the U.S. except Alaska, where it's Marmot Day) and Whitsun terms until the 1990s, when they changed to semesters; the University of Glasgow still calls its Spring term Whitsun Term. And until 1971, the spring holiday Monday in Britain was Whit Monday, the day after Pentecost, and so moved around year to year like Easter does. Since 1971, they've just had Spring Bank Holiday on the final Monday in May, corresponding to our Memorial Day.

The Commandment, Reading and Psalm were adapted from the King James Version of the Bible (first issued 1611, most commonly cited edition is the 1769). This was an update of the first translations of the Bible into English using the new medium of

print, a controversial political as well as religious act at the time, by William Tyndale. The Roman Catholic authorities looked upon this with disfavor and had him strangled and then burned him at the stake, just to make sure, on 6 October 1536. The reading is based on Acts chapter 2 where the Holy Spirit blows across a crowd and suddenly the disciples can speak perfectly to men of all nations, much to everyone's amazement. It's like I can suddenly speak fluent Tagalog. This is the gift of speaking in tongues and in some charismatic churches people still believe they have this. I've heard it a couple of times and honestly it sounds like incoherent babbling without any apparent linguistic structure, not like fluent German or anything. Perhaps they were speaking idiomatic upland Finnish or a dialect of Aramaic and I just don't recognize it. Anyway, in Acts the crowd is super impressed by this (except for the ones who think the disciples are drunk) and converted to what would become Christianity and sold everything they owned and shared among themselves each to his own need (*And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need*) which frankly sounds a bit Communist if you ask me, don't tell r/Conservative about that bit of the Bible or you'll be permanently banned like me.

It is a quirk of your Vicar that I am fond of most any tune that has survived from the 16th Century (time has a way of stripping away the dross) and "Comfort, Comfort Ye My People" is legit one of my favorite hymns. The tune slaps; it is "Freu dich sehr" first published in the Genevan Psalter of 1551. The original words to "Comfort Comfort" were written by Johannes Olearius in 1671, based on Isaiah 40:1, and later translated into English by Catherine Winkworth, (1829-1878). Although written for Saint John the Baptist's Day (June 24), it is usually sung during Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas, the beginning of the church year and a time of waiting. And shopping.

The Vicar Matthew Cole was ordained by the Universal Life Church following a rigorous screening process consisting mostly of making sure he had a valid email account. In actual life, Matt's wife Karla is the Music Director at Saint Christopher's Episcopal Church in the Twin Cities where Matt sings second string tenor in the choir most Sundays from early September to, well, Whitsunday, though I'm missing tomorrow. Stop by and hear us sometime!