

# The Blessing of the Bicycles



**Whitsun Eve**  
**Saturday May 14, 2016**  
**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, Chapters 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, 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 togeth-

er 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 Garth, 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, what shall we do? Then the Vicar did testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation! And many sold their possessions and goods, and parted their bikes out to all men, to every man who had need and also eBay. And they did eat their meat and drink their beer with gladness and singleness of heart.

Here ends the reading.

**Congregation:** Thank God!

### The Hymn "I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes"

I sing a song of the chaps on bikes; pa - tient and brave and  
 They loved their three speed tour so well, and this love made them  
 They lived not on - ly in a - ges past, there are gen - tle - men cy - clists

true, who ate and drank and rode real slow on the  
 strong, They stayed well right for safe - ty's sake for the  
 still. The world is bright with the cy - cling chaps who

7  
 ride they loved and knew. One's name was Noel and an -  
 whole of the two days long. And one was a sai - lor and  
 love to ride Bri - tish steel. You can meet them in pubs, or in

10  
 oth - er was Jon, and then there was Dave and  
 one was a priest and one church, was chased by a  
 lanes, or at sea, or in trains, or in

12  
 don't for - get Ron! They are all of them Gen - tle - men and I mean, chaps,  
 fierce, wild beast! And there's not a - ny rea - son, no, not the least, why  
 shops, or at tea. For those chaps on bikes are Nut - ters like me, and

15  
 help me to be one, too.  
 I should n't be one, too.  
 I mean to be one, too!

## The Psalm

*Adapted from King James Bible, 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 Cof-  
feeshop:  
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:** In the name of the Trinity, High Gear, Direct Drive and  
Low, go forth and ride.

**All:** RAmen

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Service adapted by Matthew Cole, the Quicker Vicar, 2016.

*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, 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 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 the shooting of bows that they used to, this is the traditional time for cheese rolling, bale throwing and Morris dancing. Hmmm, maybe we should roll a cheese off Maiden Rock! It is Wisconsin, after all! British and Empire schools often used Christian names for their terms. Saint Andrews University had Michaelmas (September 29), Candlemas (February 2, which became 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 1978, the spring holiday Monday in Britain was Whitsun or White Monday, the day after Pentecost, and so moved around year to year like Easter does. Since 1979, 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 all of a sudden the disciples can speak perfectly to men of all nations, much to their amazement. This is the gift of speaking in tongues and in some charismatic churches people think they have this. I've heard it a couple of times and it sounds like babbling, maybe really unmelodic scat singing, not like fluent German or anything, though perhaps they're speaking idiomatic upland Finnish or a rare dialect of Aramaic and I just don't recognize it. Anyway, the crowd is mostly impressed by this (except for the ones who think the disciples are drunk) and convert and also sell everything they own and share 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 Mike Huckabee about that bit. The hymn "I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes" is an adaptation of "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" by Lesbia Scott, the wife of a Royal Navy officer who wrote the song for her own children. She published a book of her own hymns for children in 1929. This tune was written by a retired American Episcopal priest, made it into the American Armed Forces hymnal and the Episcopal 1940 hymnal and became a much beloved hymn although it is virtually unknown in the UK despite all the lanes and tea stuff. The final "Ramen" at the close of the service is our interdenominational nod to Pastafarians, those who believe in the Flying Spaghetti Monster and think they have been touched by His Noodly Appendage. 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.