

Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21)

**It is clear in Acts 2 that a party is taking place—that dreams and visions are not meant to be dreamt alone.**

by [Theresa Cho](#) in the [May 13, 2015](#) issue



A Korean doljanchi birthday party. [Some rights reserved](#) by [mliu92](#).

I love a good birthday party. Not necessarily my own, but those of my kids. We don't throw elaborate birthday parties that cost an arm and a leg and require an incredible amount of planning. Ours are simple family affairs with grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. I usually make a cake inspired by Pinterest, and my mom cooks a feast that can feed a hundred. I think I love these parties because growing up, I didn't have extended family to celebrate such occasions. When my parents emigrated from Korea, it was just us—my parents, my sister, and me.

Pentecost is often referred to as the church's birthday. Whether your church is 145 years old like the one I serve or brand new as in Acts, Pentecost is when the gift of

the Holy Spirit is given for all. What a gift, and what a party.

The invitation list is insane. Everyone is there: Galileans, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Egyptians, even the Romans and Arabs. People are having such a good time that you would think they are drunk, but no! They have just received the most amazing party favors of prophecy, visions, and dreams.

The first birthday in Korean tradition is often the most celebrated. *Dol* or *doljanchi* is a ceremony in which the child is blessed with a prosperous future. A child's *dol* is an important milestone because before modern technology, the death rate for children was high. Many never had a first birthday at all.

Much of what happens at a child's *dol* is centered on dreams, visions, and hopes for that child. Fruit and colorful rice cakes are stacked high on plates to symbolize a life of prosperity. A child wears a traditional outfit called a *hanbok*, usually made out of a Korean fabric called *saekdong*—literally, “many-colored.” The pattern consists of rainbow stripes that call to mind our dreams for our children.

Also scattered on the table are assorted objects that represent other elements of prosperity. A paintbrush or book stands for wisdom; money stands for wealth; a long piece of thread means long life. Whatever the child chooses is the destiny the child claims.

Nowadays, people add to the table other objects that may represent a variety of vocations. My son chose a golf ball. Maybe that means he will be athletic or quick on his feet. My daughter decided to choose none of the intended objects, instead going straight for a plate of grapes. Maybe that means she will always have a healthy appetite. I like to think that it means she will always choose the least obvious path and determine her own destiny.

On Pentecost, the table has been set before us. We may have the ability to choose the objects before us, but it is God who sets the table. So what does God envision for us? What is set on the table before us?

Sons and daughters will prophesy. The young will see visions. The elders will dream dreams. Servants, men, and women will have the Spirit poured onto them. Wonders will occur, and all will be saved.

The good news is that we don't have to choose. It is all made available to us—no matter our gender, age, and status. This Pentecostal event, the Spirit poured out among the people, grounds us in the past with the words of Joel and launches us into the future with the call to dream dreams and see visions.

But what do we dream? The *doljanchi* table links children to the past, where grandparents and parents choose objects that embody their hopes for them. The children, however, get to interject their own visions among the buffet of hopes and dreams.

We are reminded that the Spirit that was present at Pentecost is the same Spirit that is present with us now. Therefore, we are connected to that same call to live out a faithful life in which dreams and visions may soar. Our call is to continue to lay the ground and provide the space, so our dreams can blossom in others.

What is clear in Acts 2 is that a party is taking place—that dreams and visions are not meant to be dreamt alone but in a diverse community united in the Spirit. This task of dreaming involves all of who we are. We hear and feel it, “like the howling of a fierce wind.” We see and feel it, like “individual flames of fire.” We speak it in our native language, yet it is understood by foreigners.

I surely know that I live off the dreams and hopes that my parents had for me when they moved to this country. This has empowered me to continue to provide that same gift to my children as they discover their call, dreams, and visions.