

PENTECOST, YEAR C, JUNE 5, 2022

If you were asked to define wind, what would you say? Now, my guess is that most of us are not wind sophisticates. After all, how many intelligent things can someone say about wind? Sure, we step outside and feel warm breezes or feel the cold blast as a cold front approaches, and, we also understand the force of hurricane winds. So, we know wind can be powerful. But what else is there?

A sixth grader has offered this definition for wind: “The wind is like air, only pushier!” And, what a great way to put it! I think it’s precisely the pushiness of the wind that is the point of Pentecost. You see, maybe we don’t have to know every subtlety of wind to appreciate this stirring moment in the life of the Church known as Pentecost as we need only to comprehend the power of such a force. I think it’s the strength of the wind that helps us understand how the Holy Spirit works.

And if you think about it, if God is going to deal with you and me in any substantive way, God is going to have to offer extraordinary power – and that power is the Holy Spirit. For the source of this wind is no wimpy God, who doles out newness of life through soft touches. No, God seems to breathe life into the Church through a mighty rush of wind because nothing less will work. The surge of the Spirit pushes the Church out of the upper room in Jerusalem and into the boardroom, the courtroom, the waiting room and our living rooms.

When the wind blows, things happen. In any of our backyards when the wind blows tree branches will brush against roofs, leaves and twigs drop, swings move without riders, and leaves swirl. In God’s backyard, the breath of God brings new worlds into being. The church is born and reborn again and again with God’s hope of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness generosity, faithfulness gentleness and forgiveness.

When the wind of Pentecost blew through Jerusalem, a new world came into being. The real miracle of Pentecost was not so much in the extraordinary events that marked the day—the rush of a mighty wind in a closed room, tongues of fire leaping upon those gathered there, or even the followers of Jesus speaking in the language of the nations. Rather, the real miracle was found in the empowerment experienced in every day living from that day forward.

The real miracle was to be found in what Jesus enabled those men and women to do and to be against all odds. From a rather practical point of view, they had not the first chance of success. They were uneducated, poor, powerless, and far from worldly-wise. If there had ever been a group of losers—at least from the world’s perspective—they were gathered in that room in Jerusalem that day, but something also changed that day. These men and women came out of hiding. A new confidence conquered their fear; a new sense of purpose overcame their indecisiveness; and emboldened by the Spirit’s power they gave themselves to the task to which Jesus had called them. That is not to say that all went well from that point on. It didn’t. They stumbled and fell, argued among themselves, made mistakes, big mistakes sometimes, and got sidetracked. But they also succeeded, oftentimes far beyond their greatest expectations.

Apart from the Spirit, however, they would have never left Jerusalem. Apart from the Spirit, they would have never risked failure and consequently never ventured success. Apart from the Spirit, they would have eventually returned to their homes and villages, there to live out the remainder of their days remembering what had been and only

dreaming of what could have been. Apart from the Spirit nothing would have changed, but as it was these men and women set in motion a movement that changed and is changing yet the heart of humanity and the life of the world. All this happened because they were touched and transformed by God's holy spirit - the power of God's love in ways that enabled them to take what should have been a doomed cult and make it into a faith that is claimed today by over 1/3 of the world's population

It was the Spirit who enabled them to stand on their own two feet and to act for Christ's sake. This same Spirit that filled the disciples fills your life and mine as well. Admittedly, not often if ever, does the Spirit visit us with the sound of rushing wind or with flames of fire dancing, leaping, burning within us. Of course, don't discount that possibility, but the real miracle of the Christian life is what the Spirit of Christ accomplishes within us—the inner transformation that manifests itself in the way we live and relate to each other and serve each other.

It is the Spirit who equips us for the life of discipleship and for fulfilling our God-intended roles in life. It is the Spirit who strengthens us when we are weak; who encourages us when we are weary; who leads us when we are lost; who brings us back to the way of faithfulness when we have turned to some other. It is the Spirit who enables us to seek mercy, to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly before God. The real miracle of the Christian life is what the Spirit can accomplish in your life and mine, not just in the religious sphere or the religious moment, but in every sphere and every moment of our existence, even when the odds seem stacked against us and the possibilities of success for Christ's sake seem, at best, remote.

When God breathed upon that company of first disciples assembled in Jerusalem, they felt it as wind, but it was really a breath of hope and life - the likes of which no one had ever known.

I've said this before that the term "conspiracy," has been used to describe Pentecost. Conspiracy literally means "breathing together." And, I think that's what Pentecost was – a conspiracy – but not in the sense of some sinister gathering, but as a consensus for good. The rush of wind broke down barriers. The Spirit of God permitted different people to begin breathing together. So in this case it was a beautiful conspiracy that got underway. The Spirit of God had begun to reconfigure lives.

For 2000 years people have proclaimed that Christianity and the church are extraneous. For 2000 years through all of its faults and its failures the church and Christianity have been able to transform the world for the better. At her best the church is more than a sinful human institution. At her best the church is more than just a vestige of ancient rituals.

Philip Yancey in his book "What's So Amazing About Grace", writes; "At her best if the world cuts off aid to the poor and suffering, the church will offer food and healing. If the world oppresses, the church will raise up the oppressed. If the world shames a social outcast the church will proclaim God's reconciling love. If the world seeks profit and self-fulfillment the church seeks sacrifice and service.

No matter how bitterly divided the world, the Spirit-swept church persists with the wondrous claim that even people who are completely different from one another can come to understand one another. The breath of the Spirit of God makes for vigorous forms of new life.

One windy day a four year old girl asked her mother, "Mom, may I go out and play with the wind?" "Sure," her mother replied, "Go have lots of fun." And then out on the deck, the little girl twirled and swirled. She swung her arms and danced dizzily while the wind swirled around her, pushing her here and there.

And friends, that is our task. The task of each of us is to let the Spirit play with us so that we can breathe together at the Spirit's behest. The point is that the Spirit is at work in us presenting us with new opportunities for witness and service in the name of Christ. Again and again, both in our corporate life and in our personal lives Jesus calls us out of our places of safety, out of our places of comfort, to work and strive to witness and serve him. To us Jesus has given the work of his ministry. What will we do with it? Will we play it safe? Will we turn away from the opportunities he gives us? Will we give something less than our best? Will we go out and dance in the wind? Remember the wind is like air, only pushier! Now what is the Spirit saying to the church? What is the Spirit saying to you? Amen.