

Sermon John 14:15-21 Acts 2: 1-8, 12-17, 21-24, 32-33, 36-42 May 11, 2008

The Church Alive - Blow Wind Blow - Dare We Risk Raising Our Sails

What happens when the Holy Spirit comes into our lives? When we feel the presence of the Living God? When we are caught up in something, with something, bigger, greater, more compelling and appealing than our selves. What happens when we lift the sails of our spirits and let the breath, the wind, the power of god work in us and through us?

On that day, Jesus said, on that day, you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you. On that day, that Pentecost day, they knew, those few disciples of Jesus knew, finally, fully, who Jesus was, and they felt the power of his living spirit.

What happens to you when you feel the Holy Spirit blow into your life? On that first Pentecost Sunday the Spirit of the Lord blew those few disciples right out of their meeting room into the world to share the message of God's love in Jesus Christ for all peoples...

On this Pentecost Day we celebrate what God has done and is doing in this place - in some ways blowing our place of meeting much more open to the world - to take in its beauty - but also to be reminded we are met here .... So that we can serve there for Christ.

137 years ago the Holy Spirit blew some faithful folk out of the Campbell's living room on Apple Island, into a new building here - and literally - it was the wind, the ruach, the spirit of God, that got many of them here each morning.

On this Pentecost morning we look for and long for the work of the Spirit to continue to blow on us, to work in us, to open us to be faithful witnesses as a Church and as persons - to be Ambassadors for Christ....

The wind of the spirit blows - do we want to know God's presence more strongly in our lives, will we risk raising the sails of our spirits, even not knowing for sure where the spirit will lead us? Let us pray.

Lord - no less than hurricanes and cyclones and tornados, the wind of your spirit of love can whip through your world changing lives forever. In some what fearful fwith, Lord, we come to hear Your Word and feel your spirit working in our hearts anew. Give us ears to hear, Lord, and hearts willing to be captured by the Spirit of Christ. Amen

On that day, what day? Pentecost day, yes, that day for sure, God at work in the lives of God's people. A handful of disciples, 120 Christians, that's all, And I suspect even then not all of the faithful showed up.

But I suspect that any day can be the day when the Spirit moves, and lives are Changed. It was a Sunday when I think I began to know that this spirit thing is real.

Preacher's kid imp that I was, not much got through to a restless kid not quite coping in the fish bowl of the Pastor's family. Until a Sunday School teacher said something about being in or out of God's love. And I knew I wanted to be in. A little wind caught the sail of my soul.

And some years later I knew it again. In Church. A bit of a troubled teen - not quite sure of who I was - and a hymn blew the spirit into the soul of my life. What a Friend We Have in Jesus. And spirit responded to spirit.....

And some Sundays - many Sundays - in my life then and now, the wind of the Spirit is no gale force wind at all. But in your company, through God's word, in words of hymns and prayers and scriptures, there is enough breeze blowing to fan the flame of my faith, to energize me for the week ahead.

But I do need to set the sails of my soul in my life... And you do, too. There is something more conducive more inviting for the Spirit to work when God's people gather in God's name and seek God's presence.

Then our sails can be filled. And its something I can see and sense of God's presence at work in your lives - and that encourages me, draws me along Christ's way for another day.

What did happen that first Pentecost Day that set it apart, that changed some frightened Jewish followers of a crucified rabbi, into spirit filled spirit moved On fire witnesses to world? Who really knows. What we do know is what the world saw - and has seen - an infectious flame of faith that touched them and has touched and moved people ever since to follow Jesus Christ, to claim him as Lord and savior.

And we have seen the spirit bring people alive to the special gifts they've been given by God's grace. Tom McRathe observes, in Christian Century, these truths. That when the spirit of God is at work in our lives, with our spirits, remarkable things do happen - we put to use gifts we never dreamed we had, gifts and talents that are ours by God's grace.

At work, we see a tough situation and find a way to work it through - to mediate differences and bring about effective solutions. We have wisdom we didn't know we had...

Or - Angered by the thoughtless action of another person, a salesperson, but before we spit out our own angry words, we are stopped by some inner thought - and are urged to seek to understand the issues in his or her life that might have led to our mistreatment. We have understanding..

Or - In another situation we might find words of hopeful encouragement to share with someone facing very hard times - words we don't usually find or find the time to say.

And - by grace - we are given eyes to see people in all walks of life quietly doing heroic things, persons of great fortitude. A woman left alone, holding a job, nursing her dying mother and caring for a handicapped child - such a gift of fortitude.

Or - seeing a nagging problem, we are moved to seek new answers, because we have the knowledge that doing the same things over and over only gets the same results.

Or, by God's grace we have seen people who have a depth of faith, a piety that makes their faces glow and their lives a model of Christian love. Their gift of faith inspires us.

And each of us has at sometime, seen in nature the awesome power - of earthquake, wind and fire - and felt a kind of fear, an awe of God.

What happens when the Spirit comes? These are the kinds of things that happen - the eight gifts of the Spirit, are seen - at work - wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the lord.

And - and - we know - in our own experience, by what is reported and heard by us, that the Spirit, the spirit of the living God, is alive and at work in our world.

And truth is, we will know the spirit's presence in our lives best, feel its strength most, be guided most clearly, by its power, as we participate in the life of the community of faith. For here, we hear, the whispers of God's voice, in the hymns and prayers and preaching and teaching, and in the sharing of our faith we each bring to this place.

Here in study groups, even in the work of committees, yes even in the work of committees - so much a part of being Presbyterian - and - yes - I know - God knew better than to send a committee to save us. But we do know the power of God's spirit at work in the presence of one another when we work together for a common cause.

The hunger for God's presence in their lives drew the early Christians together in regular worship and study, in fellowship, and in service. They lived tied closer together by sharing in these three expressions of Christian life.

We know God's presence together better than we ever could alone...

This is the wonder of a Christian's life - knowing more fully God's presence.

But the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives can also be a most disturbing thing - Because once we catch the spirit in the sails of our lives, we will be pushed in new directions, to new levels of trust and faith and compassion and love. It is no accident that tongues of flame are often the symbol for the Holy Spirit. When God is near our plans are subject to change.

Moses saw a burning bush and his life was never the same. Saul saw a burning light and was a changed man – his mission in life and his name – turned to Paul.

The Spirit of God in Christ is a source of comfort – God cares for us for ever. But Spirit also demands our attention - pushes us in new directions. We are being pushed by the Spirit now as a Church - new occasions teach new duties.. and we know we have new duties – to reach out in new ways to the un-churched folk all around us, and to deal with the changes in our community- changing neighborhoods around us, the changed economy, the new and exciting and deeply challenging possibilities of serving new people in new ways with new facilities -

Praying that the spirit might flow through us into the lives of others...

By the power of the Spirit and prayer – and your willingness to help – we will fulfill our Building to Share promise of building a home for the homeless in the Habitat Blitz in June.

And – we will be looking still for the next best place to reach out with the dollars we have to share.

We've dared to raise our sail as a Church - and the wind of God's spirit wants to blow through here carrying us into new forms of ministry.

Many of you have raised your sails, too, and you've found the spirit moving you in new directions - seeking new ways to let God's love for you flow through you into the lives of others, into the life of the community.

What happens when the spirit comes....? One never knows for sure – except that in God's plan no one in whom the spirit lives is quite the same again.

Did those first followers, still faithful to Jesus, have any idea what would happen to them on that Pentecost Sunday? Fearful for their safety, they prayed. They gathered to comfort one another - to be faithful to what Jesus had taught them - they set their sails.... And the Spirit blew them onto a wholly new course of living...

It is the danger of coming here...and the wonder of it. The real and present danger is that you never know, you and I never know. What God will do in our lives - when we gather here.... When we set our sails.... We only know that God will move us - not always in the ways we see as right - but in the ways God knows we need to move to serve the Christ, to do God's work, to be ambassadors of God's love.

It's why the old hymn says what it does... Every time I feel the spirit moving in my heart... I will pray. Yes... pray... indeed. For the spirit of God, once it catches the sail of your soul and mine, will lead us out into new ventures of faith, in new ways of witnessing for Christ.

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We should pray all the more now as a congregation - for we have set some sails that very well might catch the wind of the spirit and lead us into new avenues of witness.

What happens when the Spirit comes? We become more nearly the people God wills us to be. So this Pentecost day, this new day in the life of our Church, in our lives. We do pray... we do say... Breathe on us Breath of God, Fill us with life anew. That we may love what Thou dost love and do what thou would'st do. Amen.

David W. Robertson, Pastor

Sunday, May 11, 2008  
PENTECOST SUNDAY

UNVEILING OF THE CORNERSTONE  
THE FAITH ENRICHMENT CENTER

Words of Welcome

Indication of the Cornerstone Contents

Expression of thanks and gratitude to all who've supported this effort.

Announcement of the Building to Share Mission Outreach

Habitat for Humanity - Pontiac June 14 to 28

Unveiling of the Cornerstone

Prayer

Benediction

Happy Birthday Celebration

