

A Spirit That Blows Through Our Closed Doors

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Sunday, May 31, 2020 - Pentecost Acts 2:1-21

Back at Easter, when we all experienced the Weirdest Holy Easter Ever, I commented that the Easter Day itself was a troubled, confused, and even a bit scary event that did not result in widespread excitement and singing. The recognition of what God had done came over the disciples in a series of appearances (and disappearances) of the Risen Jesus.

By the time of Pentecost, the day we celebrate today, a lot has happened. There's been a shake-up on the board of disciples with a personnel change, folks have begun prayer practices together, and they are in an expectant waiting mode for what is coming next, all in one house behind closed doors .

What happens is just beyond explanation, because the description is poetic. It's amazing – with images of wind sounding like trains, tongues of fire touching each person. This holy Spirit encounter is gonna knock our socks off.

This is when the first believers received the gift of the Holy Spirit and began the mission of being Christ's witnesses "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 2:8). It is a bold mission.

The future is uncertain. Jesus is no longer with them in the flesh, but they wait and hope and trust. We can relate. We, too, have spent the last couple of months waiting at home, in uncertainty. Waiting for the end of stay-at-home orders, waiting for life to return to some semblance of normality, waiting ultimately for a vaccine to end this pandemic.

Fire and wind—these signs of the Holy Spirit—descend on the disciples on Pentecost and push them out to preach to the gathered crowd. Fire and wind are powerful symbols. They have the potential both for creation and for destruction.

The *ruach* (Spirit/wind/breath) of God broods over the face of the primordial waters and God calls forth life (Genesis 1:2). God calls Moses through a bush that burns but is not consumed and leads the Israelites with a pillar of fire out of death into life. The Spirit sustains all living creatures, renewing the face of the ground (Psalm 104:30). The Holy Spirit inspires prophets, both men and women, to see visions and to dream dreams

So, in the midst of this pandemic with its associated powers of destruction there is also a seed for renewal of our society – we have the opportunity in this challenging time to show the best of what our faith teaches – concern for others, faith in the Kingdom of God that will up end things as they are.

The coming of the Spirit guaranteed that all of us would experience the Holy personally. This is a wind that can blow through the doors of our homes, a wind that can breathe peace into our anxious hearts, a wind that will fill our hearts with love and purpose for walking into the future.

On that Pentecost day, those who gathered did not know what the next steps of the journey would entail – that over the course of this book of Acts, the gospel would reach the center of their known world, Rome, that along the way enemies would become leaders, outcasts would find a home, that those considered heathen would become spiritual siblings.

If God could do that, I am confident of God working in our time. Who might we reach today by acting in the ways that Jesus has taught us? Who might find genuine spiritual wisdom as we seek God's will today? How might God work a miracle of reconciliation in a world that is divided?

Let the Spirit blow through our closed doors, and awaken our spirits!
Amen.

WHEN THE DAY OF PENTECOST CAME

When the day of Pentecost came, there was a noise like a strong wind blowing.

Wind to blow away the cobwebs of our tradition.
Wind to freshen our faces and awaken us to the challenges of today.
Wind to fill our sails and send us on a voyage of spiritual discovery.

**Wind of the Spirit,
blow strongly through the Church
and enliven us with the breath of God.**

They saw tongues of fire...

Fire to burn away the rubbish in our lives.
Fire for spiritual heat to 'strangely warm' our hearts.
Fire to light a beacon of hope for the people in our communities.

**Fire of the Spirit,
blaze away in the Church
and set us on fire for the Gospel.**

They heard the believers speaking in their own languages.

Speaking in a way that people can understand.
Speaking to real needs, having something to say on real issues.
Speaking so that our neighbors want to listen.

**Words of the Spirit,
speak to us and through us,
that we may preach the living Word.**

But others said: 'These people are drunk.'

Perhaps they were:
Drunk on the new wine of the Kingdom of God.
High on the power of the Holy Spirit –
celebrating the birth of the Church of Jesus Christ.

**Holy Spirit of God,
inspire and excite us as we celebrate in worship,
and empower the work and witness of your Church today. Amen**

David Lemmon