

Sunday, June 4, 2017

Becoming Love: Welcome the Wind (Pentecost)

Acts 2:1-21

Marysville United Methodist Church

Pastor Jenny Smith

We moved from Alaska to Washington almost two years ago and we have a new thing we're experiencing in Washington that rarely happened in Alaska. Our homes get pretty toasty at times during the summer. We don't have air conditioning and watching us adjust to that was fairly entertaining the first and second summer. But this is now our third summer and we feel like pro's in our house-cooling-keep-the-kids-happy-but-this-is-really-about-helping-the-adults-not-be-grouchy strategy. You all have trained us well. Open the windows in the morning until it gets warmer than inside. Then we close up the house until night time. A couple portable AC units going and some water play before dinner and we're doing okay. I never would have thought the placement of fans would be in direct correlation to the annoyance level in our home.

The other night I checked Wesley's camera into his room on my phone and saw that he had pulled his fan away from the wall so much that it unplugged. He moved it right next to his bed and then started crying out that it wasn't working. We're not all pro's yet!

Today we get to talk about the Holy Spirit, wind, fans and control. Then we'll turn our attention to receiving the eucharist today.

In Christianity, we have the Trinity - God, Jesus, Holy Spirit - How many of you learned about the Trinity through ice/water/steam?

Many people relate differently to these three elements. They are all God but three different ways of being God.

It's often easier to convey what we believe about Jesus and God, but the Holy Spirit can be a little tricky. We can relate to Jesus as a human being and we may feel comfort about God being a parental and comforting image. But the symbols we use for the Holy Spirit are far less human. Fire, wind, water, a dove, a ghost? Then we have some faith traditions that talk about the Spirit in relation to speaking in tongues and if we haven't had that experience, we're not sure what to do with the Spirit (umc.org).

What does scripture tell us about the Holy Spirit? It's our Helper, our Teacher, it helps us in our weakness, intercedes for us, the evidence/fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc., it's a gift to be received, our bodies are a temple and the Holy Spirit lives in us, it's powerful and it leads to freedom.

On Monday, we had friends over for a meal and I set out placemats on the picnic tables in the backyard. Every 10 minutes I would be outside doing something and glance over at the table to see 5-6 of the placemats either on the ground or moved around. I first thought someone had moved them until I realized the wind was moving them. I found myself a little frustrated with the wind. I was trying to fight it.

It got me thinking about the wind and some of its' characteristics.

- We feel the wind. We can't really see it. We can see the effects of it.
- We can't capture the wind. We can't control the wind. It blows where it will.
- The strength of the wind varies. Sometimes it's a light breeze on a warm day, other times it's a destructive tornado or hurricane or windstorm. Still other times the humid hot day aches for a gentle breeze that's absent.

- The wind pushes out stale air.
- We can't program or direct the wind.
- Sometimes we seek shelter from the wind. It can literally uproot things around us. Life can look very different in an instant.
- When Isabella was four, she was riding on her dad's shoulders on a day trip to Seattle and she said, "Mom! I just ate wind!"
- All we can do is sit back and feel the wind. Enjoy it. Be curious about it. Receive it as a gift that comes and goes.

Connections to Pentecost

- V2-3 (MSG): *Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks...*
 - No warning
 - A sound like a strong wind
 - Didn't know the source
 - Filled the space
 - Spread like wildfire
 - This was how the Holy Spirit introduced itself to a bunch of Galileans, a bunch of nobodies in society at the time.
 - Does this sound like something that could have been controlled, forced in a certain direction or pre-planned? No.

Their leader stands to explain and basically says, "God is here. God is empowering us to do things in a new way." It's like show and tell. "This is what is inside of us now. There is a power available to us that's stronger than any other power in this world."

The unleashing of God's Spirit indicates the beginning of a new day in human history. The spirit today does the same for us.

So what does this mean for you and for us as a faith community?

The Holy Spirit is a bit like a fan.

I have a fan here with four different settings. Off, 1, 2, 3 with 3 being the strongest. And I would suggest that just as we set our fans for optimal comfort in the room, we sometimes think we can control the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

We think we can choose a 1 or a 2 - we want an average amount of God's movement in our lives. Just enough to help us out, but not too much that it's uncomfortable or disruptive.

Or we might choose the off button at seasons, even unplug the whole fan and box it up and put it in storage. We're good on our own. We've got the plan. No assistance is really needed.

But as Jesus followers, we don't get to control the settings on the fan.

The Holy Spirit moves in and through our lives without consulting our pre-planned schedule. All the sudden, a new season is here. An opportunity to grow, to die to something you've been clutching for too long, and it makes us uncomfortable. So we try to turn the fan off, but the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that we can't turn the fan off.

We can observe what the Spirit is doing in our lives. We can learn from it. But we can't control it.

I have found that when you think you can control something that's not meant to be controlled, you miss out big time. We waste a lot of time trying to control things that were never meant to be controlled.

So I leave you with this question today.

Can you welcome a new thing without trying to control it?

Or another way of saying it...

The Spirit is always doing a new thing. Will we fight the wind or welcome the wind? Amen.