

Tapping into the Power of the Wind  
Acts 2:1-22  
May 11, 2008 Pastor Draeger 10AM

Lutherans have not been particularly strong over the years on the 3<sup>rd</sup> article of the Apostles' Creed. We don't talk much about the Holy Spirit. In fact, I remember as an adolescent, late high school or early college years, I remember reading an article in the Lutheran Witness this time of year. It was talking about Pentecost and the lead article was "The Holy Spirit, The Forgotten Person of the Trinity." I don't remember much from those days in life, but I do remember that article because it was so poignant, and I thought, "what does this mean?" -- you know, the good Lutheran question (I'd been through catechism). So I read through that with interest. It's still true all these years later that we still struggle with coming to grips with the person of the Holy Spirit. So we're going to talk a little about that Holy Spirit this morning on Mother's Day because it is also Pentecost. And because we don't talk much about the Holy Spirit, it's important I think, that we pause this morning and acknowledge this third person of the Trinity and what it means we are born from above. That we are born of the flesh of the flesh, and that which is born of the spirit (Holy Spirit) is spirit. Pentecost is about our spiritual life and how we live it.

And as we do that I'd like you to just think about the word spirit, because the word *spirit*, both in Greek and in Hebrew, is the word for *breath* or *wind* as well as *spirit*. And so it should come as no great surprise that there would be this reference to the sound of the rush of a mighty wind. We know that wind has power, don't we? We've been reading about that this past week and seeing images from both the east coast as well as the country that was once known as Burma, now known as Myanmar. We've been seeing the great devastation and destruction and power of the wind.

So when you hear these words that the disciples are gathered together for worship and for prayer and for study of scripture - or whatever they were doing there - they were observing the Festival of Weeks, which was an annual event in Judaism. It had been happening since the days of Moses, recorded first for us in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, that 7 weeks after Passover, the people of God were together to celebrate the harvest. So it was kind of like a Thanksgiving - they were celebrating from the winter harvest. And they were acknowledging God, and it was always the 50 days after the Sunday of Passover.

So there were people gathered together from all kinds of places in the city of Jerusalem; and the disciples themselves were gathered in community. As they are gathered together in community, this idea of wind and power is displayed in a very dramatic way. As they're there praying and studying and talking together, there was the sound of the rush of a mighty wind. Doesn't say there was wind - it says there was the sound. So it doesn't mean we necessarily had hurricane force or cyclone force winds there, it was just the sound of that. If any of you have heard the sound of wind you know that it can be powerful. If you've lived through a hurricane or a tornado, you know about the power of wind first hand, and how much of a sound it has. In fact, people that have gone through a

tornado say it sounds like a freight train. That kind of sound came through that room that day, and it must of just surprised the socks off all these gathered in the room. We don't know how many were there, but it would suggest that there were more than the twelve, but it was a bunch of disciples that were gathered in this house.

Not only did they have this bizarre experience of the sound of the rush of a mighty wind, but they had another experience, remember what it was? Before the speaking in tongues there was a fire that was there, present as it were, and then the fire broke up into little pieces and a tongue of fire landed on everybody's head, but they didn't get their scalp burned. Another one of those miracle things, or God things if you will. Then after the spirit comes upon them in this form - sounds of the mighty wind, tongues of fire - now they begin to speak in other tongues, and they were speaking in languages that people could understand. They said, "How is it (they were amazed and perplexed), how is it that these people are speaking and we are understanding the language?"

Well, it becomes very curious to us, unless you understand something very simple. Why would these Galileans be speaking in our language? Let's just stop for a second, a person who speaks three languages is considered to be trilingual. If you speak two languages you're considered bilingual. If you speak one language you're considered American. If you just rewind back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century the joke would have gone like this - three languages you're trilingual, two languages you're bilingual, one language you are Galilean. That would have been the joke in those days, because Galileans were not well educated. Galileans were maybe business people in the case of these fishermen; and they were somewhat successful in their business as fishermen, but they weren't expected to speak many languages. And so when it happens that these Galileans speak many languages, they are amazed and perplexed, and they asked the Lutheran question - what does this mean? They're surprised at this.

Well, when you think about the word spirit and the sound of the wind and the word spirit, which means wind or breath or spirit. And then when you think all the way back in the Old Testament when God created Adam and breathed into him the breath of life; it's the Hebrew word for spirit. So they've got the breath of life, they've got the spirit life from God, we begin to understand this idea of spirit has a bigger understanding, a bigger connotation. And maybe to help us out, just think about wind power today and how we try to harness it. If you drive over to Modesto or Stockton, you go along 580, you pass through the Altamont Pass, and what do you pass? The wind machines out there that are there to capture the power of the wind, and transfer that into a useable source of energy. So wind is considered a renewable energy source.

And I'd like to suggest to you today on this Pentecost, that God has a way of renewing His energy source within us. The renewable energy source is the power of the Holy Spirit who comes to us first of all in the waters of baptism, where we are receiving the washing of regeneration and renewing in the Holy Spirit as Paul talks about it in Titus 3. Jesus would say to Nicodemus, that which is born of flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Holy Spirit is spirit; new life.

And then we also read the scriptures where it says that the word of God is the “sword of the spirit.” And we also know that the Spirit of God works in the sacrament of Holy Communion, where the message of the gospel is now brought to light and life through bread and wine; through the body and blood of Christ who comes to us. It is a spirit-driven God thing. Now all that is so that we can know that we have this renewable energy from God; a spirit life that would take ordinary people like these Galileans and do some extraordinary things through them.

I’m thinking it was kind of cool that God used ordinary people. How many in this room think you’re kind of ordinary? You might have a doctorate in something but you still consider yourself ordinary people. You might be very well schooled in many areas of your life and you still consider yourself ordinary. So the idea is, God uses ordinary people. If everybody were extraordinary, that would be ordinary - if everybody is extraordinary there’s no such thing as extraordinary, that’s now ordinary. So we are the ordinary people and God wants to use ordinary to accomplish big things. He used an ordinary manger to be the first place of rest for Jesus. He used an ordinary human, body and blood, to live and die and rise again for us. He used ordinary people to tell the story, but all of that was about people whose lives had been changed. In fact, Jesus 10 days before this, had said to His disciples on the day when He ascended into heaven, He says, “Stay here in Jerusalem and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witness in Jerusalem, Judea and the uttermost parts of the world.” So what He was saying is, you’re going to receive power. And the Greek word there for power is the word dynamis. We get English words from that - dynamite, dynamo - and we think of dynamite and dynamo as having a lot of power. The power of God is the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is the power of the Holy Spirit bringing the benefits of Jesus’ death and resurrection to us that transforms us, washes us and renews us in the waters of baptism.

It is that same power that transforms ordinary people like Peter and James and John and the others, so that their lives would be forever different. In fact, their lives were so different that day that Peter and those, together went outside and began to proclaim the message in a way that everyone could understand it, even though they had never learned those languages. It was a God thing. And they did that with a sense of boldness. Remember what happened 53 days before that? Peter, wimpy Peter, denied Jesus before the women out in the garden while he was waiting to hear what was happening to Jesus, as He was being tried back with the Sanhedrin.

What’s interesting is, seeing the Risen Lord didn’t change Peter. He was still behind closed doors. He wasn’t a bold proclaimer of God’s love, it didn’t happen until Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit comes upon him they receive the spirit power and now he’s fearless. He’s willing to stand up in front of the folks who were saying these guys are just a bunch of drunkards. He says, “No way, it’s 9 o’clock in the morning, we haven’t been nipping on the sauce yet. No beer, no wine, nothing; we are stone sober. This is in fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophet Joel. This is what we’ve been looking forward to - so that the people might know that the name of Jesus provides salvation,” that’s how the text ends.

So what is occurring here is that God is taking these ordinary people and using them in an extraordinary way to be the messengers of His amazing love. That the forgiveness of sin was now going to be in the hands and the mouths of these ordinary disciples; - that He was going to empower them. And you know people, we have received that same Holy Spirit that came upon the gathered people that day. We've received it in the waters of baptism. We receive it in the power of His word. We receive it in the sacrament of Holy Communion. We receive the same spirit who emboldens us so that we can share the message of God's amazing love for people.

Today is Mother's Day, and on Mother's Day the big word is love, (mom is love,) because mom typifies love - stays up at night and takes care of kids who are sick. Changes poopy diapers, cleans up vomit, kisses wounded knees; does all that dirty stuff. Mom's have you ever done any of those things? Yes, so you identify with that. Why do you do that? Because it's in the contract? Noooo. You do it because you love. So if there is one person on the planet that embodies love, it is of course a mother's love.

That's also the love of our Father, our Father loves the planet the same way a mother loves her child. Our Father in heaven loved the planet so much that He would sacrifice His own Son for us, that we might know how much He loved. God so loved the world, we've been doing that for six weeks. God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that *whoever, whoever, whoever* believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. It's that love that He wants proclaimed, that He wants to use ordinary people for that purpose. He wants to use the Peter's, the James', the Judas's, Judas the son of Simon and others to proclaim the message of His love.

That's why we do such things as Bags of Love in San Francisco. That's why we do Maple Street Shelter. That's why we do tutoring in Roosevelt School. That's why we do things like water bottles that we're going to have available so people can see about God's love. That's why we do Rwanda Well, and that's why when we do have our new Redeemer water bottles, we're going to charge \$5.00 for these guys, \$1.00 of which is going to feed the Rwanda Well project; and someone has said we're going to match whatever is raised so we can reach that goal so that we can build a well in Rwanda because people are without water. And many of those people are without the Good News, and one of the things that we know is that when you do good deeds, it creates good will and people will then listen to the Good News; and the Good News is that God loves people. In fact the verse that Bernie Wong put on here for us is - Those who drink the water I will give, will never thirst. Jesus. And of course we know that comes out of John chapter 4. We're going to have these and we're going to use these to create interest as well as to take \$1.00 from it and help people in Rwanda who are without fresh water, without running water, maybe without even a well in their community.

Why do we do these things? Because good deeds produce good will which gives us an opportunity to speak the Good News, that the thirst quencher is really Jesus. The One who brings peace to broken lives is Jesus. The One who brings hope and help and healing is Jesus, and we want to be able to proclaim that to people who need to know that. There are lots of people on this planet who don't know that. There's lots of people on this

Peninsula who don't have a relationship with Jesus, and we are the ones who are empowered and hopefully embolden to take the message to others so that we're not just like a bunch of drunken folk at 9 o'clock in the morning. But we're sober minded and we share God's love because we know that God cares about people's lives, their life now and their life in eternity. He wants to write the names of people in the book of life, and He wants to write it in the blood of Jesus Christ. And He will do that as we proclaim that message of love to other people.

So while we're here to celebrate Mother's Day, yes, and mother's love, we want to celebrate a love that transcends that and motivates that; and that's the love of God for people. We want to be sure and be clear, that we're the ones who are tapped into the power; the renewable energy source.

And I'd like to challenge you every time you go past those windmills over in the Altamont Pass, I'd like to challenge you to think about the wind, the holy wind, the wind of God, the power of God, the renewable energy source of God that has come to us in word and sacrament. And then maybe even every time you take a sip out of a water bottle something like this, whether it's this one or the one from Arrowhead Springs, that you'd think of people in Rwanda; maybe pray for them. Or maybe even for the people who live in the former state of Burma, now called Myanmar. You might want to think about those folks and pray for them that they might come to know Him who quenches every thirst, who brings the water of life, the power of His spirit that is distributed in word and sacrament.

May God bless you and me to that end, that we are tapped into the renewable energy source of the wind, the Spirit of God. Amen.