

Sermon for May 20, 2018
Pentecost Sunday
“Some Fresh Air”

Acts 2:1-11

The kingdom of God is like a person who left a car out in the sun. Someone left their car sitting out in the sun with all the windows rolled up. When they returned to the car it was blistering hot inside. The temperature was comfortable outside. But everything in the car was almost too hot to touch.

The air in the car was hot and dry. It was so hot that it was hard to breath. And it smelled stale.

So immediately the driver rolled down all the windows. As if on cue a cool breeze brew through the car. The air in the car immediately cooled down and was easy to breath. The air was also no longer stale. Instead it smelled of wildflowers and mown grass. The oppressive heat and the stale air were literally gone with the wind.

The kingdom of God is like a young man ... He has no direction or purpose in his life. His teachers and mentors and even his peers look at him and say “He’s going nowhere.” He has no reason to go anywhere. He has no joy. And so he has no incentive or ambition to better himself.

Then along comes a young woman. He is attracted to her and she takes an interest in him. His teachers and coaches and friends notice a change in him. He combs his hair now. He even goes and gets a job!

Suddenly he has a purpose; a direction. He has joy in his live. He is in love! Not just a passing infatuation. But a genuine devotion to this young woman. He wants to make something of himself. Like a breath of fresh air she has come into his life. And this loving relationship has redeemed him from his joyless existence. She has brought life to the staleness of his heart.

The kingdom of God is like the disciples ... After Jesus’ death they gathered in the upper room. They hid there for fear of the religious leaders. They were afraid that the people who had arranged Jesus’ crucifixion might come looking for them. And after Jesus ascended they were all there in that one place...

“Ooo Ooo! I know what’s coming. The preacher's gonna talk about Pentecost. About the tongues of flame that rested on all the apostles. And how they all spoke in different languages just like the people did earlier in the service. And, and, and the people hear the gospel and were saved ...”

Hold on just a minute! We all like to hear about that stuff because it is exciting and important. But the story of Pentecost didn’t start with tongues of fire and the languages of the known world. It started in an upper room. The doors were shut and the disciples were all gathered there.

Are you catching on? This was Jerusalem in late May or early June. The doors and windows were shut. And 11 men plus some women and other men are gathered in the 2nd floor of a house. They didn’t have air conditioning or fans. It must have been hot and dry and it probably didn’t smell good either.

So, the story of Pentecost starts with a room full of dead stagnant air. The first thing we are told happened was that there was a mighty rushing wind. And it filled the room where they were. In the Bible the wind is often a symbol for the Holy Spirit. In Hebrew the same word "*ruwach*" means both wind and spirit. This is also true of the Greek word "*pneuma*."

So, the Holy Spirit comes from heaven and blows into the house. This is fresh air from God blowing into the upper room. It is blowing out all the dead and stale air. It is replacing the lifeless stuff that they have been breathing and with something fresh and cool.

It is only then that the disciples come to life. Once the fresh air of the Spirit has come in then they see tongues of fire. Once the stale dead air of their lives is blown away then they begin speaking in other languages. Only when the Spirit replaces the dead air do lives begin to get changed!

Is it just me or is it getting a little stuffy in here? Maybe we should open a few windows or something. All joking aside sometimes it gets stuffy in the church. If you keep a room closed so nothing new can get in, the air stops moving. It gets stale and dead. It even starts to smell bad.

We like what we've got here in the church so we shut the doors to hold it in. But the Spirit doesn't work that way. Jesus said, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8) If you try to shut the wind up it dies.

Have you seen that commercial? The boy is on a hill top near the shore with a jar. He holds the jar up and then closes the lid on it tight. He then takes a long journey during which he protects the closed jar. Finally, he ends up at cottage where his grandfather is about to blow out the candles on his birthday cake. So the boy opens the jar and out rushes the wind blowing out the candles and everything else in the cottage. That commercial is funny because we all know that wind doesn't work that way.

About 30 years ago the United Methodist Church had an advertising slogan: "Catch the Spirit." How can you catch the Spirit? You can get caught up by the Spirit, but if you were to capture it, it would be like the boy with the jar. I like the new slogan better "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors." You see being open is not just about some secular idea of inclusiveness. It does encompass that but then goes further. "Open hearts, Open minds, Open doors" is a spiritual principle. We have to open the church up to allow the Holy Spirit to blow through it. Then miraculous things happen and lives are changed!

Is your life getting a little stuffy? Is your spirit stale and dry? Open your heart. Let the Holy Spirit blow in your life. Let it bring the cool air of God's love and grace and forgiveness into your heart.

You have to open your heart to let the Spirit move. Wind can't blow in a closed room. Allow God's love and grace to circulate in your soul.

Do you feel that? Ahh, a nice cool breeze. Open yourself to God and let the mighty rushing wind of the Holy Spirit blow through your life. Then watch as miracles happen and lives are changed!