

May 11, 2008

Title: Living In a Windy Place

Text: Acts 2:1-21

Thesis: If you want to catch the wind of God's Spirit, you have to be where the wind blows.

Background for the Message:

We have just concluded the Season of Easter and now we begin the Season of Pentecost. On the Church Calendar, Christ is risen and has ascended into heaven. Today marks the occasion when Jesus fulfilled his promise to send the Holy Spirit who would not only live among His people, but would live within and work through His people. We will conclude the message today at the Lord's Table observing communion, where we will once again place ourselves in the way of God's grace as the Spirit of God continues His work in our lives.

Introduction

In John 3, Jesus was in a conversation with a man named Nicodemus, attempting to explain the difference between physical birth and spiritual birth, i.e., being born of the Spirit or born again. You may be able to predict what we call "a due date" when we speak of anticipating the physical birth of a baby. However, it is not so easy to predict or anticipate when or how people are born of the Spirit or born again.

He likened the movement of the Spirit of God to the movement of the wind. He said you can hear wind but you cannot see it. Our text today describes the moving of God's Spirit as the sound of a windstorm in the sky above. You cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going... but you know when it hits you.

The Northern Gannet is a large seabird with a wingspan of up to 70 inches. Its range is the North Atlantic and it lives in large colonies of up to 60,000 birds, on cliffs overlooking the ocean or on rocky islands. They are, as you will soon see, spectacular divers when they feed, but they have also learned to catch and ride the wind. (wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Gannet)

Watch how these spectacular birds catch the wind.

Catching the Wind Clip of Northern Gannets (YouTube, Traveling Birds = Northern Gannets)

If you want to capture the power of the wind, you have to be where the wind blows. We have just observed the way the Northern Gannet finds and rides the wind in the Northern Atlantic. The analogy is the same for the wind of the Spirit... there are places where we are more likely to encounter the

Spirit than others. Our text suggests that the power of the wind is most likely captured in community.

1. The Wind of God's Spirit is most likely captured in Community.

"The believers were meeting together in one place." Acts 2:1

Utility scale wind power is not found just anywhere. The U.S. Department of Energy has published a color-coded, Colorado Wind Resource Map. The map clearly indicates on a scale from poor to superb, where wind power is sufficient to generate utility scale electrical power. Some of the best wind farms are located from Ft. Collins, north to the Wyoming border. If you travel I-76 north of Sterling, you can see wind farms to the west. Another hot spot for wind power is a large area south of Lamar, CO. The exposed ridge of the Front Range and the Continental Divide are also prime places to catch the wind. The Western Slope, on the other hand, is not.

(U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Colorado Wind Power Resource Map)

Wind farms are strategically placed where they will most likely generate utility scale electrical power. The collective power of community is illustrated by the way wind farmers configure turbine generators on wind farms.

Notice how the wind towers are gathered together in a specific place.

Project: Wind Farm Photo

Wind is a powerful force when captured in the right place.

The Christians in Jerusalem were all together in one place. They were gathered – they were not in different places. The ones who stayed at home that day, missed the wind of God's Spirit. This is not to say that God does not move in individual lives in times and places of isolation, because God moves at will. There are many things about God that are predictable but God would not be God if we had God all figured out. In fact, in scripture God specifically states that his thoughts are completely different than our thoughts and his ways are beyond anything we might imagine. Isaiah 55:8

That said, Christianity is largely about living, serving, worshipping, learning, fellowshiping, and growing in gatherings.

The wisdom literature of the Old Testament speaks of the power of community.

- "Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can**

**reach out and help. A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple braided cord is not easily broken.”
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

Jesus spoke of the power of prayer when prayed in community.

- **“I tell you this: If two or three of you are gathered here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three are gathered together because they are mine or in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:20**

A thread woven throughout the Epistles is how we relate to one another in the context of the faith community. Christians are one another people, not isolated and independent spirits.

- **“Love one another with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring one another.” Romans 12:10**
- **“Live in harmony with one another...” Romans 12:16**
- **“Greet one another in Christian love...” Romans 16:16**
- **“Serve one another in love...” Galatians 5:13**
- **“Make allowances for one another’s faults... bind yourselves together with peace.” Ephesians 4:2-3**
- **“Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:32-33**
- **“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ...” Ephesians 5:21**
- **“Encourage one another and build each other up...” I Thessalonians 5:11**

When Paul taught about the interconnectedness of the faith community, he described us as a body.

- **“Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.” Romans 12:5 and I Corinthians 12:27**

Our body parts do not and cannot function without being interconnected to the whole.

The Yellow Pages ad invites us to “Let your fingers do the walking.” Danish rock band Sort Sol lead singer sings “Let your fingers do the walking” as a musician deftly picks out the haunting melody on his mandolin. Our youth, with amazing dexterity send their fingers racing over

the keypads of their cell phones in seemingly non-stop text messaging. But no finger can walk through the yellow pages or pick out a melody on a mandolin or text a message apart from being connected to the body. We are interconnected.

When Jesus served the Lord's Supper, he called his disciples together.

- "At the proper time Jesus and the disciples at down together at the table..." Luke 22:14

And in the biblical instructions regarding the observance of The Lord 's Supper, Paul wrote:

- "When you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other..." I Corinthians 11:33

Even the observance of the Last Supper is a communal occasion... something we do together.

I have attempted to stress the importance of coming together and being together and the mutual benefits that come from gathering as a faith community. Gathering is generally a sign of health.

In a rural or ranching community, a farmer/rancher will often go out to where the cattle are grazing or to feed the cattle when grazing is scarce. Healthy and hungry cattle will graze together and will come up when they know a load of feed is on the way. The unhealthy will not come up... if the cattleman drives around his pasture he may find one from his herd has gone off alone, that one is either going off to calve or is injured or sick. In any case, the isolated critter is in need of care.

When people go into isolation, it is a symptom of something more than the desire to be alone. When people live in isolation, even if they were healthy at the onset... they will not remain so long. Isolation breeds loneliness and depression, which leads to an even greater sense of isolation, loneliness, and depression.

In an article about loneliness and the elderly, I read about Harold, an 86-year-old retired lineman for the phone company. His wife of 60 years died last year, leaving him alone in the home they shared for many decades. He used to be a hunter and outdoorsmen — an activity that helped him cope when Helen died. But after injuring himself in a fall, he's been relegated to using a walker around the house. He passes the days watching television game shows and staring out the window onto land he can no longer walk. It's sunset, about the time he and Helen used to sit down to their evening meal. He's decided he can't endure another day alone in this house. (Roberta

Rand, Troubledwith.com, Caring for the Elderly, Loneliness and Depression Afflicting the Elderly)

Living in isolation is not a healthy way to live.

2. People are not meant to live in isolation.

Even God lives in community. God created us to be with other people because being in community is a characteristic of the Godhead.

- **God said, “Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves...”
Genesis 1:24**

We understand God as a Triune God... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We attempt to describe the mystery of the Trinity saying, God exists as three persons in one God. We observe God as transcendent but occasionally present in the Old Testament in instances like God walking in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve and speaking to Moses on Mt. Sinai. God the Son, Jesus Christ, became one of us and lived among us. God the Holy Spirit has come to live within us and live out the life of Christ through us.

Toward the end of the creation narrative, God stepped back and looked everything over. He saw all of the creatures romping about, each capable of reproducing its own kind, and then he saw the Adam was all alone.

- **God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion suitable for him.” Genesis 2:18**

The New Testament references to the Church are not references to a place or a building. The Church (Greek “ekklesia”) refers to an assembly of people or a group of people called out to a meeting.

In the book of Hebrews, Christians are urged to assemble or gather together.

- **“Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do...”
Hebrews 10:25**

Christ is described as the head of the church, which is his body in Ephesians 5:23 and Colossians 3:18. And as we noted earlier, it is people who constitute the body of Christ. We exist in community as a body and as an assembly.

The Day of Pentecost was marked by a gathering of Christians who experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit, who arrived with the sound of a mighty wind. Other manifestations included tongues of fire resting on each of the followers of Christ and the Holy Spirit enabling them to speak in

other known dialects and languages so everyone from all the countries who had come to Jerusalem, could hear the Good News of Jesus Christ in their own language.

Though there are many more things that may be explored in this text, I want to fix on the gathered community as a place where God's Holy Spirit is likely to meet us. I believe as we gather around the Lord's Table, we have placed ourselves in a place where we will likely catch the Wind of God's Spirit.

The Table is a place of grace where the sinner may seek and receive forgiveness. The Table is a place where our spirits are nourished as we receive the work of Christ through the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup. The Table is a place where the Spirit of God meets us as we renew our commitments to be devoted followers of Christ. The Table is a place of grace where we welcome the ongoing work of the One who has begun a good work in our lives. The Table is the place where we replicate the Last Supper and in so doing announce the Lord's death until he comes again.

So I invite you to come...

Come to this table... so that in gathering we may catch the wind of God's Spirit as we place ourselves in the way of grace.

May the wind of God's Spirit fill this place and may a spirit of grace rest upon each who has gathered.

**If you have come seeking forgiveness, may you receive mercy.
If you have come seeking healing, may God touch you body and soul.
If you have come seeking comfort, may God grant you peace.
If you have come seeking wisdom, may God give you guidance.
If you have come seeking hope, may God lift your despair.
If you have come seeking renewal, may God restore your spirit.
If you have come seeking a place, may God welcome you to his table.
If you have come seeking assurance, may God give you certainty.
If you have come seeking answers, may God give you understanding.
If you have come seeking salvation, may God forgive you all your sin, free you from all your guilt, and fill you with his Spirit and the hope of eternal life.**

Come to this table...