

Pentecost – May 24, 2015

Acts 2:1-21

Psalms 104:25-35, 37

Romans 8:22-27

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Wind Power

A sermon preached by The Rev. Dianne Andrews at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Port Townsend, WA

Creation was, and is... an “inspired” gift from God. In the beginning, when the earth was a formless void, a wind from God, the spirit of God, the “ruach” as it is known in Hebrew, swept over the waters and began stirring creation into being. That same breath, that same Spirit, fills our lungs at the moment of our birth. When we take a breath in, we inspire. When we inspire we take in air, and oxygen, a most basic and essential, ethereal substance that keeps us alive. To be inspired is to take in the breath of life, a breath that is from God, a breath that fills us, stir us, animates us as part of God’s blessing and dream. We are here this morning to welcome this gift of the Spirit that stirs us to life, and inspires our whole being as a community of disciples... calling us, with each and every breath, to be fully alive as part of God’s holy dream. It is this gift that called the Church into being at the moment that a sound, like the rush of a violent wind... filled the entire house where the disciples were gathered... sparking flames, fueled by God’s breath, amazing the disciples, perplexing them too... filling them... inspiring the recollection of the prophet Joel’s words of God’s declaration that:

In the last days... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.... upon [all] I will pour out my Spirit.

This morning we welcome the gift of the Holy Spirit. Today we are also participating in a rite of passage for two of our own who are crossing over the bridge from childhood into young womanhood. We are doing this as a community of caring as we support Sarah Carpenter and Celia Yesunas in their movement into a new stage in their lives. As a final preparation for this rite of passage Celia and Sarah spent time away, yesterday, with their mentors Tanya, Beth and Elisabeth. This time away included strolling the beach and pondering the questions: What aspects of your childhood are you ready to let go of and say “good-bye”? ... and what parts of your childhood do you want to keep always? This time away offered an opportunity to get clearer about the meaning of this moment of transition into young womanhood. The girls were asked to describe what they feel and understand to be God’s dream. One answered, God’s dream is “to have a brave, independent world.” The other answered that God’s dream is “for peace and happiness among all people, even when you mess up, there is forgiveness.” It is a question for all of us too... to reconnect with the dream in which we were created, and to articulate that dream, for ourselves, as part God’s movement in us... as individuals... and as a community of faith. Celia and Sarah were also asked, “What is your part in helping to bring God’s dream to life?” Their answers were: “helping others to understand God’s dream” and “to try to be my absolute happiest – and to be kind to others because they are part of God too.”

As we participate in this Rite-13 ceremony we are also giving our support to Sarah and Celia’s parents who are moving to a new moment in their parenthood. We will ask blessings on them as they let go into this new moment in their daughter’s lives... letting go of their precious children as they guide

their daughters and help them grow in strength and independence as young women. Their work as parents is certainly not done, nor will it ever be. We know how quickly babes in arms take their first steps and... in the blink of an eye, it seems.... they are teenagers growing into their own right and independence. We are here for Theresa, and Susan and Mike today in this movement into a new stage of their parenthood.

The invitation of Pentecost, the invitation to grow in the Spirit... is to 'open our sails,' at whatever stage of life we are inhabiting. We are to open our sails, as children who delight in surprises, in butterflies, in silly jokes, as teenagers who are stretching their wings, trying on new ways of being, finding their own voices, as adults who navigate their decades putting to use their knowledge and experience seeking to find a steady balance in the juggle of work and home and recreation, as parents whose jobs came without an instruction book, as friends and mentors who seek to share in the task of nurturing children and one another...as faithful disciples who strive to serve God's dream.

To open our sails is risky... to quote Br. Geoffrey Tristram of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, opening our sails is risky... "because once the wind of the spirit catches us, the journey may be scary. God may take us to places where we don't feel comfortable, where we shall need all our courage and fortitude." Courage and fortitude may be required, but we are not alone. In our lesson from the Gospel according to John, from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Jesus tells us about the "Advocate" that is to come. The Advocate will stand by us and testify for us. If we look at the translation from the Greek given the Common English Bible the word is not "advocate" it is "companion." Companion literally means "one with whom to break bread." Jesus has promised a companion to be with us... to walk beside us... to strengthen us... to be with us in the breaking and sharing of bread. The advocate, the companion, is here in our midst.

For Sarah and Celia, and for all of us whose lives are being renewed by the gift of the Holy Spirit this day... we are to breathe deeply and let the Spirit fill every corner of our being. It is very important, and don't forget... to breathe out! Breathe out and let go of all that is unneeded, all that does not serve to promote health and well being. Let the Spirit bring you back to center. Invite the Spirit to bring God's dream alive inside.... filling your imaginations, strengthening your will and your desire to serve God's dream in you... in your words and in your actions... calling you to be fully who you were created to be.

Barbara Brown Taylor has said of the Holy Spirit: "There is no limit to what the Holy Spirit can do. You just cannot hold your breath, that is all. You have to keep breathing, keep paying attention, keep responding to whatever crazy idea you come up with next. Some people call it intuition. Others call it inspiration. Forever and ever, the church has called it the Holy Spirit."¹

Christ did not come into the world for just a few, but for all... and as a gift he sent the Holy Spirit to help those who have come to know the beauty of Christ's love and to share that grace, that treasure with others. It is a gift, a treasure that multiplies like yeast, like the mighty life force within a tiny mustard seed. Like wind and flames from above that stir us awake to life. Let us breathe in the Spirit, be thankful, and let us get to work as faithful ones in Christ.

Amen....

¹ Barbara Brown Taylor, *Bread of Angels*, Cambridge, MA: Crowley Pub., 1997, pp. 72-73