

## Spirit of Gentleness

Texts: Acts 2:1-21

Romans 8:22-27 (Series B. the Day of Pentecost) Ps. 104:24-35

John 15:26-27

Let us pray:

O God, light of the minds that know you, life of the souls that love you, and strength of the thoughts that seek you - bless the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts. Breathe your life into us that we may live in the manner you have appointed unto us and better love and serve you and one another. Amen.

In the Book of Acts we heard the account of what happened at the first Pentecost. We are told that all of the believers were gathered in one place, much like we are gathered here, this morning. Firstly, the sound of a strong wind blowing was heard. The sound of whistling wind wasn't just outside the building; it was right there in the room.

Was this the same wind that blew across the world at the time of the creation (see *Gen 1:1,2*) and finally gave breath to the first person God created?

Was this the same rushing wind that Ezekiel saw in his vision, when the Spirit blew across the valley filled with dry bones and gave the bodies breath and they came to life (see *Ezekiel 37*)?

When the sound of the wind stopped, a very strange thing appeared in the room where the believers gathered that first Pentecost. We are told, "*They saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there*" (*Acts 2:3*). After the flame had touched each person in that room, they began to talk in other languages. The disciples hadn't studied languages, and yet they spoke foreign languages fluently and talked about "*the great things God had done.*"

The disciples of Jesus experienced a radical change in their lives; after the fire and the wind touched them and entered them, they started to do things that they had never done before. These *fearful, timid, and discouraged* disciples were made new creatures - brought to life - in a new way - much as the bones in the valley of dry bones received new life in the sight of the prophet Ezekiel.

The Spirit of God is that breath that proceeds from the Father and the Son - creates and makes all things new – the Spirit makes them all that God intended them to be. The *Day of Pentecost* ushered in a *new age, the age of the Spirit - the age of new life, a new beginning* - for all people.

We very often hear about beginning new eras and new periods in human life. Every so often, a new region in Africa gets piped or clean water, or every time a new power plant is built in an area that had no power before, an important official will address the people and speak of a *new era, a new start, a new creation, a new epoch*. But, in fact, human life, in its relationships, goes on as it has before. The only difference is that the quarrels at home, the fights in the bars and on the streets, the deceptive talk, the cheating, the lying, the killing, and the selfish grasping are now done in electric light while drinking clean water.

Real human newness cannot be a building, a power plant, a landing on the moon or a flight to Mars; nor can it be a sociological paradigm, a new communication system or even a new set of laws or enforcement of old laws.

We cannot change the quarrels in a family by eating better food, by installing a large screen TV or by buying a bigger car. "*We'll never be successful in our most important relationships until we learn to drain the anger out of another person's life.*" A real evolutionary step can only be made if *mentalities* and *attitudes* change; real progress can only be made if outlooks change. That is what happened at the moment the Spirit of God descended upon the disciples. The disciples became not only capable of speaking all kinds of languages, but were willing to use those languages to contact people they never would have thought of addressing before.

It happened when they went from believing in *forgiveness*, to showing *forgiveness*. It happened when they went from believing that God would protect them, to actually venturing forth from the upper room into the danger-filled streets of Jerusalem and beyond.

It happened when they went from thinking about what Jesus had said, to proclaiming what Jesus said - *in word* - and *in deed*, and reaching out *to heal*, *to serve* - and *to love* - all those around them and beyond.

There is a mysterious moment in our lives, for you and for me:

- ❖ a moment when belief comes alive,
- ❖ a moment when our thinking about the promises that God has made becomes a transforming faith in us,
- ❖ a moment when ideas and concepts suddenly move our *minds* and our *hearts* and, through these, move our feet and our hands, our mouths and our lips in a new and life-giving way.
- ❖ a moment when we live our lives based on the character of God.

That moment is the gift of the Holy Spirit. That moment is the fruit of the Holy Spirit which now dwells in all flesh and seeks to bring us closer to God - and closer to one another. For the first disciples, that moment happened with a rush of wind and tongues of fire - and it still happens that way for some people.

For John Wesley - the founder of the Methodist Church - it came when he was listening to Martin Luther's Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans, and he felt his heart "*strangely warmed.*" For me, it came to me at the age of 19, in Ghana, while several people of faith prayed over me, and I felt the presence of God overwhelm me, and my life has changed since then.

For others – the Spirit may come through parents, a friend or a pastor and, as with the first disciples, as with John Wesley, and even as with me - it changes lives. Yes! It does. It gives life to the form and substance, life to the heart and soul.

It is the evidence, as Paul writes - it is the sign and it is the seal of our relationship with God. God's gift took me from having belief in God - to having God's power in me. Today, it's easy for us to be blasé, to know the story too well, to be immune to the thrill, the astonishment.

No matter the planning, hopes, and desires of the preacher, sadly and often, it seems that the *wonder* of it all has been lost, especially when not everyone is physically present in the Church. So it is then, that today is the day to stop knowing the story. Today is the day we start experiencing the Spirit.

When we let God within us - when we let the Spirit within us - beautiful things do happen. Since I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour at the age of 19, my life has been different for the better - meaningful and purposeful. This new life didn't happen to me on my own strength; it was totally the work of the Holy Spirit. We have the Spirit within us, and God's grace, and the love and Salvation of Christ merely for the wanting of it!

Peter reminds us, in the words of the prophet Joel, that when Christ returns, *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*. And Jesus tells the disciples, from whom we follow on, that they/we are to *testify* on behalf of Jesus. The Gospels tell us how to do it; God filled our lungs with breath, and the Spirit gives us our voice.

Let us rejoice and be glad and joy-filled and *alive* in it; after all, it's Pentecost, and we're on fire! The Spirit flows in us and, through us, it flows to others. It is like the wind. It is like the gentle flapping of a dove's wings. It is like a river. It is like a still, small voice that speaks gently within us; a gentle Spirit speaking gently to us.

And this, my dear friends in Christ, is the age we are in: the new age that was born on the day of Pentecost; an age that allows for a true transformation, for a new way of living. The Holy Spirit allows it to happen - it brings it to reality, and all we have to do to enter this age is to reach out for it in faith.

Jesus cried out: *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink."* When we drink, when we turn to God, when we believe and seek him in prayer, in church, in the world around us, God comes -- he comes in the Spirit - and he will uphold us -- he works a new work in us and, through us, he works in others; he works to establish his kingdom fully upon the earth - as it is in heaven.

Let us listen to the Holy Spirit as he tells us that we have been far too lax when it comes to our faith and to our Church. Let's listen to the Spirit, as he reminds us of the joy of knowing Jesus who died for us and forgives us.

Those early Christians were excited about Jesus, the community of believers, their faith, and their new direction in life. The Holy Spirit did it then, and he still does it today.

As the scripture has said, *"Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water."* He makes it so, through the gift of Pentecost - the gift of his Spirit... Come Holy Spirit... Praise be to God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Let us pray:** Living, loving, Holy Lord, you put the Spirit within us, filled us with the fire of faith, and gave your breath to our lungs to power our voices. Let us exhilarate in all your works and testify to your enduring glory and the gift of salvation for *everyone* who calls upon your Name. Our joyful and unending prayers ascend to Jesus, our Risen Christ; and the Holy Spirit, our Eternal Advocate; who together with You live as One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Prayer concerns:** *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Wess Bourgaize, Johannes Eidnes, Hanne Bourgeoise, Ellen Eriksen, Joanne Severyn, Peace in the Middle East, the two Michaels in prison in China & COVID-19 patients, essential and front-line workers.*

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

- Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart # 800
- Spirit of Gentleness # 396
- Come, Gracious Spirit, Heavenly Dove # 404

**Birthday Celebrations.**

- Johannes Eidnes
- Bjørg Berg
- Shawn Husain

May 23, 2021