



At Home Worship for Faith and Hope

Pentecost Sunday

May 23, 2021

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

*Call to Worship

The wind at our backs, we entered Jerusalem.

Only to watch him die on the cross.

It spiraled so quickly. Trial. Torture. Crucifixion. Death.

But on the third day the breath of God blew new life into our futures.

Forty days with the risen Jesus.

Before he ascended, Jesus promised us that the Spirit will come.

It was on Pentecost. It was on Pentecost when the wind breathed into each and every one of us.

*Opening Prayer

*Spirit God, blow into our lives, move us to action, break down the walls that separate us. Where our language divides, offer us translation. Where our fear overcomes, fill us with the fire of courage. Where our lives are stagnant, fill our sails with fresh wind, moving us forward into the unknown future. Fill us with the love and hope and power and promise of Pentecost! **Amen.***

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of praise and gratitude!

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

A Prayer for Pentecost Sunday

~ written by Roberta Hiday

*Our God—we, your people, stand ready and open
to receive the flame of your Spirit.*

Give us the ability to speak your truth so that others may hear.

Come, Spirit of Truth, fill our hearts.

May that which was of stone be now transformed into life.

Come, Spirit of Life, change our hearts.

May we who receive your light dwell together in Your love.

Come, Spirit of Love, soften our hearts.

Bestow your compassion on those who suffer in mind, spirit, and body.

Come, Spirit of Hope, heal our hearts.

Make us bold to bring light to the dark places,

warmth to the cold places, and love to the empty places.

Come, Spirit of Faith, strengthen our hearts.

Spirit of the Living God, fill our hearts, minds, and souls to overflowing.

Come, Spirit of God, move in our hearts.

Our God—we, your people,

celebrate the mystery of your never-ending love.

Amen.

Come, Thou Almighty King

1. Come, thou almighty King,
help us thy name to sing,
help us to praise!
Father all glorious,
o'er all victorious,
come and reign over us, Ancient of Days!

2. Come, thou incarnate Word,
gird on thy mighty sword,
our prayer attend!
Come, and thy people bless,
and give thy word success;
Spirit of holiness, on us descend!

3. Come, holy Comforter,
thy sacred witness bear
in this glad hour.
Thou who almighty art,
now rule in every heart,
and ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power!

4. To thee, great One in Three,
eternal praises be,
hence, evermore.
Thy sovereign majesty
may we in glory see,
and to eternity love and adore!

Spirit Song (#347)

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you
with his Spirit and his love;
Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.
Oh, let him have the things that hold you,
and his Spirit, like a dove,
Will descend upon your life and make you whole.

Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.
Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.

Oh, come and sing the song with gladness
as your hearts are filled with joy.
Lift your hands in sweet surrender to his name.
Oh, give him all your tears and sadness,
give him all your years of pain,
And you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.
Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you
with his Spirit and his love;
Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.
Oh, let him have the things that hold you,
and his Spirit, like a dove,
Will descend upon your life and make you whole.
Will descend upon your life and make you whole.

Fresh Wind of the Spirit

Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; 32-34 (NLT)

Introduction

Have you ever been in the **doldrums**? Truthfully, we have all been there at some point in time. Of course, that is a colloquial expression describing a state of inactivity, listlessness, or stagnation. It is derived from historical maritime usage referring to a low-pressure area (actually the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone) around the equator where the prevailing winds are calm. Sometimes these winds disappear altogether, trapping sail-powered boats for periods of days or weeks.

The Pacific doldrums were notably described in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ***Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner***: *"All in a hot and copper sky, The bloody Sun, at noon, 'Right up above the mast did stand, No bigger than the Moon. Day after day, day after day, We were stuck, no breath no motion; As idle as a painted ship Upon a painted ocean."*

Well, people get in the doldrums at times...feel as if they are stuck in a low-pressure zone with little or no movement or progress. A range of emotions accompany such stretches...frustration, anger, helplessness, hopelessness, even mild depression. What causes such experiences? Likely too many to mention. A year-and-a-half lull in the doldrums of a pandemic are at the top of the list of causes. This surreal experience has left indelible marks on our souls. People feel stuck. Even today, when the vaccines have finally had time to lessen the severity of the pandemic, people still report to sensing they are caught in-between, listless, and stagnant.

I know I personally encounter them when I am facing a troubling situation that seems to have no solution...when it seems we are caught in the in-between period of how things are and how you'd like them to be. How about you? Some experience these spiritual doldrums when they have failed at some endeavor and cannot seem to find their way to forgiveness or a place where they can learn and grow through the experience.

Perhaps it is helpful to mention that churches get stuck in the doldrums too...when the prevailing winds of faith and vitality are all too calm, even stagnate. If ever there were a group of people in the doldrums it was the band of Jesus' followers in the days after his crucifixion.

- ***Prior to the Resurrection***: they had betrayed, denied, and abandoned Jesus at the trial, the scourging, and the crucifixion; they were crushed by their failure; they were so paralyzed by their fear that they hid in the Upper Room; so defeated were they after Jesus' death that some started returning to their old way of life. They were stuck. No way out. Totally down on themselves. Almost suffocating in their grief and their guilt. Lifeless.

- **After the Resurrection:** It is a completely different story! Their faith was ignited with a new love and boldness unparalleled in human history. They courageously proclaimed the gospel to the very people that had previously caused them to retreat in fear to the Upper Room. They put their lives on the line over and over eventually paying the ultimate price to tell the story. Their countenance was so transformed with love and joy people thought they were drunk.

What in the world happened to this band of Jesus followers? Or in the words of the old Mazda commercial: **“Somem’s up!”**

Whatever happened to Peter and the disciples, we want to happen to the church today!

The fresh wind of the Spirit blew into their lives in history-making power. The promise of Acts 1:8 came to pass even as they waited in prayer in the Upper Room:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Let’s turn to Acts 2:1-4; 32-34 (NLT) to find out how it all happened:

¹ On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

I want to take a few moments to describe this in ways we can grasp today. It all seems so unusual to our ears, so distant from any likely experience of our own. As a result, we often dismiss this as something that was just for the disciples in the aftermath of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension; but certainly not for us. That or else out of our reach altogether. Well, I want us to challenge those assumptions today. Perhaps a fresh look at these fresh winds will help.

Wind: The Church is energized with power

“Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting.”

Throughout the Scriptures wind represents divine energy. The wind tells us that when the Spirit comes there is energizing and life-giving power. Look at what happened in the story recounted in Ezekiel 37 where the renewing *“Breath of God”* restored life to the dry bones of those in Ezekiel’s vision.

Theologian Stephen Seamands claims, *“The church is absolutely dependent on the life-giving work of the Spirit. Without the Spirit, it quickly degenerates into a mere human institution.”* Quite simply the

church that runs on its own human power cannot live as Jesus called us to live, cannot complete the mission Jesus in which Jesus called us to participate. It is a church that finds itself in the doldrums.

We can experience this personally when we attempt to live our faith life in our own power. We can detect this readily by asking these questions: Where do you find yourself exhausted and so discouraged you are about to throw in the towel? Where have you been relying too much on your self-determination?

We need the wind of the Spirit blow into our lives...more on that in a moment.

Fire: The Church becomes radiant with purity

“Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them.”

“When the Spirit comes, the Spirit comes as a purging, purifying, cleansing, and refining fire.”

--Seamands

In both Testaments of the Bible, fire is often associated with purifying and cleansing. For instance, in 1 Peter 1:6-7, Peter highlights in reference to the trials we face in life:

*So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. ⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. **It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold.** So, when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*

Do you need the Holy Spirit to make you pure in some area of your life? Invite the Spirit to come and refine away all that would divide and distort your life.

I have had two experiences recently where God's Spirit was working in sure and powerful ways to purify the hearts of people drawing them to the joy and delight of a heart clear before God....

The Church astonishes the world with productivity

“And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.”

This seems almost strange, even bizarre to our ears. People being given the capacity to speak in other languages through divine enabling. But look at it through this perspective: ever since the Tower of Babel in Genesis when human language and interaction was cursed, God has been on a mission to restore our capacity to speak to one another. Pentecost is a divine expression of God reversing the effects of that curse and restoring creation to its original design.

The disciples astonished the world with their productivity! Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit the apostles were able to communicate in all the languages that were represented on Pentecost Day. People had gathered from all over the world and heard the gospel in their native tongue.

Again listen to Stephen Seamands, *“Productivity occurs that can’t be accounted for in merely human terms. Service to God that counts, that makes a difference, that builds up the body of Christ, that extends the horizons of God’s kingdom—that’s what happens when the Spirit comes!”*

The Missing Perspective

Next, I want us to go back to a passage I shared last week. Acts 2:32-34.

*“God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, **gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us**, just as you see and hear today. ³⁴ For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said, ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit in the place of honor at my right hand ³⁵ until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet.”’”*

We cannot grasp the true nature of Pentecost unless we see it from the perspective of Jesus’ Ascension. It is not merely that in Jesus’ Ascension, the Holy Spirit is given as a “replacement.” This is what many seem to believe. It is far deeper than that! Consider this quote from the great Bible expositor G. Campbell Morgan:

“Then what was new as the result of the coming of the Spirit? Comprehensively, by that whelming of the Spirit, these disciples were made actually, though mystically, one with Christ in the very fact of His own life. They were made sharers of the life of Christ. When the Spirit came, Jesus’ actual life passed into their lives...Were they no longer His servants? Surely, they were His servants, but no longer sent from Him, but the very instruments of Jesus’ own going. Their hands became His hands to touch others tenderly, His feet to run on swift errands of God’s love; their eyes, His eyes to glow with His tenderness; themselves part of Himself.”

When the Holy Spirit came upon them, Jesus Himself—the risen, ascended Jesus, seated at the Father’s right hand—came alive in them! No longer were they merely sent on a mission by Him. Rather, they became the very instruments of Jesus’ own going. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Himself, risen and ascended, was now carrying out His mission through them!

I mentioned earlier in this message: ***“Whatever happened to Peter and the disciples, we want to happen to the church today!”*** We need this to happen to us all over again! I need it. You need it. We all need it.

Conclusion *(I am indebted to Clayton Bell for the seed idea for the conclusion)*

So the fresh wind of the Spirit blew in to rescue Jesus' followers when they were caught in the doldrums...listless and lifeless and lonely in their failure and their fear. The Holy Spirit seeks to do the same in our hearts and in our churches.

But, practically speaking, how do we tap into the wind of the Holy Spirit? We cannot catch the wind. We cannot capture the wind in a box. We cannot chase the wind down like a cowboy at the rodeo and lasso it. Simply put, we cannot catch the wind!

But if you can't catch the wind, at least the wind can catch you, if you have your sails unfurled and are ready for the adventure of obedience, if the blades of the windmill are unlocked to turn the dynamo, if the wings of your soul are spread, to be lifted by its currents.

Jesus said, *"The Holy Spirit is like the wind that blows where it wills,"* and you see its effects, you can feel its force. But the Holy Spirit cannot be wrapped in a package. *You can't contain him, but you can be filled with him. You cannot tie him down, but you can be released by him. You can take the ropes off the sails of your life and catch the driving force of his presence. You can spread the wings of your spirit to catch the currents of his power and be lifted to undreamed of heights of living and usefulness.*

O my dear friends, you can't catch the wind, but you can be caught by it. You can't take the Spirit and make him fit your mold, but you can turn your life over to him and let him remold and reshape you.

Here's how:

1. First, ask him to increase our desire for more of himself and more of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
2. Second, ask Jesus to increase our will to surrender and give up control.
3. Third, we should ask Jesus to increase our faith in his promise and the heavenly Father's promise to fill us with the Holy Spirit.

Do you find yourself caught in the doldrums? Need the fresh wind of the Spirit to blow through your life? Has Pentecost happened in your life? Have you discovered the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in you through faith in Jesus Christ? ***You can't catch the wind, but the wind can catch you.***