

Rev. Janet R. Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
Pentecost Sunday  
June 5, 2022  
Scripture: Acts 2: 1-21

## **Sermon: Riding the Winds of Change**

Have you ever been caught in a windstorm, hurricane or tornado? Last September we had a tornado rip through Mullica Hill and destroy neighborhoods quickly. Being in a strong wind can be terrifying.

The disciples can relate. They were gathered together, sitting around in one place when “suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting.” The word “suddenly” is important because it shows us that the disciples were not expecting what came next! Even though Jesus had told them that God would send them a “helper,” still the disciples were not expecting the Holy Spirit to arrive quite like this.

Imagine that scene happening today in our worship service when such a violent wind comes in and blows things around, like a tornado inside the building.

Perhaps that makes us feel a little uncomfortable. We prefer to think of the Spirit blowing like a gentle breeze. When we admit that the Holy Spirit can blow like a violent wind, then we must admit that it has the power to change everything—including the way in which we live our lives and maybe that is just a little uncomfortable for us to think about—the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives.

Imagine what that must have been like for the disciples, as well as all those gathered that day. They were finally beginning to understand the work that was ahead for them, and their eyes were opening to the possibilities of God working in their lives. God was changing the disciples the moment the wind blew and the tongues of fire came upon them.

Only when they allowed themselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit did they truly understand who Jesus was and the awesome magnificence

and mystery of God. It was the power of the Holy Spirit that enabled them to spread the word of God.

The church began to grow after this event. That is why Pentecost is considered the beginning of the Christian church. Pentecost is 50 days after Jesus' resurrection. This was the day Jesus' promise was fulfilled and the special gift Jesus told them about was given and the disciples, as well as us, would never be alone.

Ever since that day the wind and fire came upon the people, God's people have known it is God's intention for his church to grow. God doesn't want his church to stay the same. He wants it to get better and he wants his people to experience change and growth in their spiritual life.

The winds of change came and empowered the faithful. Those winds are still blowing upon the Church and its people. The faithful are still being swept up to new heights of worship, work, and witness.

That Pentecost Day, the faithful were moved and changed, and their tongues came alive. They were empowered and gifted for life in the Kingdom of God and ministry to the world.

The winds of change caused Nicodemus to go to Jesus in the darkness of the night. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again, the mind of Nicodemus was not ready to receive spiritual truth, and he just couldn't understand what Jesus meant or how such a thing could be possible. How could a grown man or woman be born again? In the physical sense it is impossible, but with the winds of change from the Holy Spirit, the condition of the heart changes, and we are born anew from a spiritual rebirth. The love of God begins to reach out to us as the wind of the Spirit begins to blow and calls us to repentance and we become new creations.

We need to be aware of the movement of the Spirit. It means living in the Spirit by being led by the Spirit.

One thing that can keep us from being changed by the Spirit is the fear of change. We want things to remain the same and stay with the familiar, and some even have contempt for the new. Contempt for the new often blinds us to the fresh blessings God is pouring out upon his people through the Holy Spirit. It's like the parables of the wineskins and old garments, "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment,

for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do you pour new wine into old wineskins. If you do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” (Matthew 9: 16-17)

The point is simple. We must go with God to grow with God. God is pouring out His blessings and we must have new wineskins in the church to receive those blessings. That means God wants us to change for the better and not be satisfied with what is but to have a desire to serve God more and respond to his changes and to new experiences.

Our Lord is the one who calls us to step out of the boat and walk on water with him. Our Lord is the one who calls us to take up the cross and follow him. Our Lord is the one who calls us to lose our lives in order to find life in him.

Let us open our hands and hearts when the Holy Spirit winds start blowing in our direction. May we allow ourselves to be changed by the Holy Spirit.

Are we a monument to the past or a movement into the future? Is the church a monument to the past or a movement into the future?

Are we acting like God is alive and is still actively changing lives? We need to pray to experience the freshness, newness and blessings of the Holy Spirit in our lives and those around us.

Our prayer should be that the wind of the Spirit and the wind of change will blow through the churches today. We need to pray that a mighty wind of revival will sweep across this nation and around the world bringing with it a renewal of faith in Almighty God!

Our prayer is that the winds of the Holy Spirit will tear down walls of doubt and fear and anger and violence and that the Spirit of God will break through the hardened hearts of those that don't know Jesus, and those who refuse to submit to his authority will be brought to a place where they will be born again and feel the breath of God upon their lives.

God's breath, God's Spirit is giving life to us. When we are receiving the Holy Spirit, we are receiving Jesus into our life. What we need is an awakening to the Holy Spirit!

When the great evangelist Rodney “Gypsy” Smith was asked to name the greatest need of today’s church he answered, “Another Pentecost!” When asked what the second and third greatest need was in the church, he answered, “Another Pentecost!” We need the Holy Spirit’s empowerment today and people need the Lord and the indwelling of his Holy Spirit.

The winds of change are blowing, and we can be moved by the Spirit. A believer by the name of Richard Bott once said, “I wonder what it would be like if every day we took the time to keep our mind, our hearts and our souls open to the movement of the Holy Spirit—not just in our lives, but in our world around us?”

If we did that, then we would be so amazed at the Spiritual sightings around us. We need to be willing to move from a Spirit of gentleness to a Spirit that is a wind of change and one that shakes up the old and blows off the cobwebs, to allow new life and new growth.

We need to allow the Spirit to ignite us and to set us on fire and empower us to share our faith, just like it did for the early disciples.

The church is powerless without the presence of the Holy Spirit. Without the Fire and the Wind there is no power to change anything!

Today the church needs to again pray for the breath of God to blow upon us, and our hearts need to desire the change. We need to have a feeling of expectancy that something powerful will happen in our midst. Our hearts need to burn with a desire to see something from God and have the tongues of Fire upon us, as well to serve in his Name.

Are you ready for the Winds of Change in your life and in the life of the church? Pray for change so that we can be his witnesses telling people about Jesus everywhere, in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.