

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Pentecost Sunday

Sermon Reflection Notes

It's Pentecost! What does this mean? It is *the* question as we continue to be in a community of faith together, striving to grow as followers of Christ.

Last week, we heard about the ascension of Jesus and the instructions given to the disciples, to wait in Jerusalem for the coming promise of the Father. We can't be sure what they thought they were waiting for, but it is reasonable to think they believed they were waiting for Jesus to return and lead a political revolution, a complete change of the world order. They probably believed they had an idea of the plan, of what would happen next. And we can all identify with that. We often believe we know and understand the plan, only to find out that God has other ideas.

Pentecost comes to the disciples with a rushing, violent, chaotic destructive wind, and if that wasn't enough, it is accompanied by fire and confusion as everyone present began speaking in other languages. "What does this mean?" they asked. The skeptics were first to answer, of course. The voice of the skeptic always creeps in when God is about to do something because we are uncomfortable, we are nervous, and, if we are really honest, we are afraid. The voice of the skeptic is the one that questions how much we really trust and believe in what God is up to. We've discussed doubt recently, and we remember that it is normal, but it isn't where we want to live permanently.

It is vital to recognize that the wind of Pentecost connects us to all the other mentions of wind in scripture and exactly what wind means in scripture. Wind is special...it translates to breath and spirit. The wind of Pentecost is the Holy Spirit moving among the disciples and among us, stirring up the status quo and preparing us for God. The wind of resurrection didn't come calmly because the goal of resurrection was not to maintain the status quo. Polite conversation isn't the goal; active participation in being a part of the Body of Christ is the goal.

The church is the Body of Christ and we are the church, each of us with different gifts and needs, supporting the whole as we work to build the Kingdom of God. Pentecost is a reminder that the Spirit is still present. And if it is present, it is moving. And by definition that creates change. The church is never more connected to Christ than when the Spirit is present and moving and when we are uncomfortable. So let's be uncomfortable together as we embrace the winds of Pentecost and see where God leads us next.

Scripture

Acts 2:1-21 (NRSVUE)

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem, speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others sneered and said, "It doesn't mean anything. They are drunk with new wine." ¹⁴ As the twelve stood together, Peter shouted to the crowd, "Men of Judea and all who are staying here in Jerusalem, listen. I want you to understand: ¹⁵ these people aren't drunk as you may think. Look, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! ¹⁶ No, *this isn't drunkenness*; this is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel.

Discussion Questions

1. Where are the places we hear about wind in other scripture stories? What is the purpose of wind in these stories? What does it signal?
2. Rev. Dr. Andy said in the sermon "We can't compete with Pentecost. It isn't a rubric for us to follow." What do you think he was suggesting?
3. Skepticism was the first reaction to the winds, fire, and speaking in other languages of Pentecost. We often react in the same way to new, unusual things around us. What are effective ways to deal with skeptics and skepticism? What doesn't usually work?
4. Pentecost winds are not about gentle nudges. Pentecost winds brought about creation, the parting of the Red Sea, the resurrection, and the church itself. What Pentecost winds are blowing now and how are we handling them?
5. "The community is at the center of Acts, with the God of the community being the chief actor in the drama" (Willimon 29). It may be worth arguing that God is not only the chief actor, God is also the writer and director. What is the drama about? What story is being birthed?
6. "The first gift of the spirit is the gift of speech..." The service this week centered around all the ways people are involved in the ministries of Manchester United Methodist Church. We heard their stories and saw the fruits of their labor in a variety of ways. What is at the core of all the examples we saw and the sermon itself?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, your Spirit blows into our life, and creation is born, waters part, storms are stilled and your church is born. We are afraid, we are amazed, we are skeptical, and we also want to trust you. You blow our world out of nothing to abundance, you blow the church out of despair to new life, you blow the world out of chaos toward peace. We pray this day, that you will rush us beyond our own imagination, beyond our fears, until we become faithful disciples of your Pentecost Wind. We pray in the name of the One who was calm in the midst of your Wind, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.