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Sunday, May 23, 2010
Pentecost

Sermon Texts: Genesis 11: 1-9
John 14: 8-17, 25-27
Acts 2: 1-21
Romans 8: 14-18, 26-39

Sermon Title: "Is There Any Wind?"

Sermon Topic: Pentecost & Communion with God's Holy Spirit

Sermon Purpose: To teach about the nature of Pentecost and its relationship to our service to (and in) Christ's kingdom.

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Sermon Prayer: Loving and providing God, as You send Your Spirit upon us to enliven us to Your Will and to Your Ways. May the words of my lips and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight and inspired by Your love. In the precious name of our Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.

Thomas Kinsey is a retired pastor from New Hampshire. He tells about a birthday card he sent to his dad on his father's 75th birthday. Standing there in the card shop, looking for that proverbial "perfect card," his eyes kept going back to this one, particular card – with a drawing of two boats tied to a dock in what appeared to be a New England town.

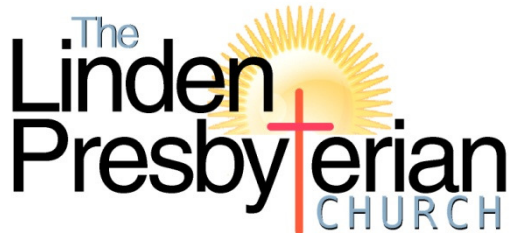
Although Kinsey lives in New England, his parents live in the hills of West Virginia, and have never **owned** a boat, nor have they ever shown any **interest** in boating. Since his father had a childhood experience that caused him to **fear** the water, the older man never learned to **swim**. But, Kinsey continued to look at the card. There was something about it that was meaningful.

The older Kinsey is said to be a very simple man. If you were to draw a straight line through the pilgrimage of life, his father would not vary from that line one bit. He believes in simplicity and an uncomplicated lifestyle.

As Kinsey continued to look at that card, he noticed one boat was a **sailboat**, the other a **rowboat**. He wondered. If his father had to make the choice of which boat he would prefer in order to cross that body of water, which would he choose? Kinsey bought the card, and in a note to his Dad shared the thoughts he had in the card shop. Then, he asked his father this question, "In your simple style of living, and with your ability to decide things that make the most sense, which boat would you choose?"

Several weeks later, he received this response from his father, "I noticed that the rowboat had no engine, but that the sailboat had a sail. Before making a decision, my question is this: Is there any wind?"





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Today, we celebrate the birthday of the Church, known as the Day of Pentecost. And the question we want to ask is, "Is there any wind?" Must we spend the rest of our days rowing - dependent only on our **own** power, alone - or might we put up our sails and catch the wind of God? Is there any wind?

On the first Christian Pentecost there was a mighty wind. According to Acts 1:15 and 2:1, early in the morning 120 believers were meeting together in a house in Jerusalem to wait and pray as Jesus had instructed them. As they were worshipping, they heard a loud sound coming from the sky. It was the wind. The wind was howling like they had never heard it before. They looked up and saw what looked like giant tongues of fire descending. The tongues of fire landed on each person present. In that dramatic moment, all the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. And they each began speaking in different languages, "as the Spirit gave them ability."

Then, an interesting thing happened. People on the streets and in nearby houses heard the commotion and wanted to find out what was going on. Soon the believers, themselves - caught up in the Spirit, spilled out onto the street as well. A crowd gathered.

Notice, however, that only those who were alert to God's activity understood what was happening? The people outside of the believers' house were amazed and perplexed. They didn't have a clue as to what was going on! Their only possible explanation of what they were witnessing was that the believers were drunk.

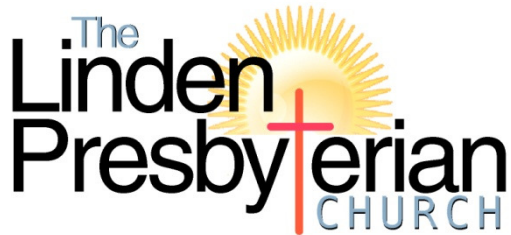
The **believers**, on the other hand, knew **exactly** what was happening. They had been meeting daily for prayer and worship. As soon as the Holy Spirit descended upon them they knew Christ's promise was being fulfilled. When we're alert to God, we can see and hear things that other people miss.

Sometimes, I think we're not aware of the power we possess. A while back, a cardiologist at a California hospital conducted an experiment in healing. The study included 393 seriously ill cardiac patients. From this group, 192 were selected randomly for special treatment. The special treatment was prayer. Selected people around the country were asked to pray for each of these 192 patients. Their conditions were described in detail. The people who were praying were asked to focus their prayers toward "beneficial healing and quick recovery." The remaining patients were given the usual medical care, but without prayer.

Ten months later, the results revealed a **startling** conclusion. The patients who were **prayed** for experienced markedly fewer incidences of cardiac-related infections, pulmonary edema, and mortality than did the 201 patients **not** prayed for. It's important to note that the patients selected for prayer did not even know they were being prayed **for**. And the people praying had never met the patients for whom they were asking Divine help. To them, they were just a name.¹ And yet, their prayers **worked!**

If prayer can accomplish so much at a **distance**, what might happen in **our** lives and in our **church** if we were to pray for those close at hand? **Lives** would be transformed and so would our **church!** We don't realize the power at our disposal. The mediocre **can** become the **magnificent!**





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Even more impressively, that which was dead can come alive! According to the March/April 1992 issue of *The Upper Room*, Walt Case was driving through the desert of West Texas one day in early July. As he drove through, he agonized for anyone or anything that had tried to live in the barren desert. A virtually rainless winter and spring had left the desert absolutely parched. "Worst in memory," was the common observation of the locals.

Then, six weeks later and after five inches of rain had fallen, Walt retraced his route through the desert. But now, it was different. "I saw a contrast that was nothing less than miraculous," he says. By mid-August the desert is usually green from the summer rains, but this year it was positively **luxuriant**. Countless patches of brightly colored wild flowers dotted the roadside. The extremes were notable even to those most familiar with the rebirth that rain brings to the desert.ⁱⁱ

That's what happens when a life-bringing wind blows across a desert. That's also what happens when the wind of God's Spirit blows across our lives. We are refreshed, empowered, and transformed. And so the question for this morning is: "Is there any wind?" Are we left to row our boat slowly and painfully through the waters of life all alone, or may we put up our sails to catch the wind of God? Most of you know that the word for Spirit and the word for wind are the same in the Hebrew. (You've heard me discuss that fact on **other** Pentecost Sundays.) And I'm here to tell you on **this** Pentecost Sunday that the Spirit of God, the mighty wind of God, is available this day to all who desire it.

Amen.

ⁱ *Happiness Is a Choice*. Barry Neil Kaufman. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1991. pp. 110-111.

ⁱⁱ Walt Case. *The Upper Room*. March/April 1992, p. 57.

