

Natalie W. Bell  
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 Pentecost

***The Power of the Spirit***  
***Acts 2:1-21, 37-38***

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

*<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." <sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"*

*<sup>13</sup> But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."*

*<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup> Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:*

*<sup>17</sup> 'In the last days it will be, God declares,  
 that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
 and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
 and your young men shall see visions,  
 and your old men shall dream dreams.*

*<sup>18</sup> Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
 in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
 and they shall prophesy.*

*<sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above  
 and signs on the earth below,  
 blood, and fire, and smoky mist.*

*<sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,*

*before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.*

*<sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' .....*

### ***The First Converts***

*<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers,<sup>[4]</sup> what should we do?" <sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The **context** of this amazing story is so important.

These believers were gathered together, **watching, waiting, praying, Expecting** something to happen—which is when God's power broke in!

I wonder, do **we have this expectation** today?

Do we come here, expecting the Holy Spirit to show up?

Just before our story today, in the first chapter of Acts,

Before he ascends to heaven, the disciples ask Jesus—

so is this the time when you will restore our people?

And Jesus tells them: **wait for the gift that's been promised,**

*in a few days you will be **baptized** by the Holy Spirit...*

Jesus had told them during his final days on earth, that he was leaving, but the **Holy Spirit** would come to be with them.

The Counselor, the Advocate, the one to guide, teach and remind them.

Then after the resurrection, he tells them the **same thing,**

But he tells them to expect something even **more.**

He says you will **receive power** when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

That's the story of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost!

The Spirit is about giving us **truth, counsel, and power.**

Do you need this power---the **wind and fire** of Pentecost?

I know I do!

**Jesus knew** that after his death his followers would be tempted to forget what He taught them.

So he promised them His Spirit—*the Holy Spirit*.  
 In Greek Jesus uses the word *Paraclete* for the Spirit—  
 which means helper, advocate, counselor,  
 the one who comes alongside to help.

But here's something interesting about the Greek in John 14.  
 In John 14:16 Jesus promises *another Counselor to be with you forever*.  
 In Greek there are two words for *another*—one means *different*,  
 and the second means *just like the first one*.

Jesus says *allos*—which means another *just like the first one*.

Think about it like this.

If you are reading a book that you love, and you loan it out and say,  
 it's ok, you keep it, I'll get another—  
 you don't mean you'll get a different book to read,  
 you mean you'll *get another copy of that book*.

*A copy.*

That's what Jesus promises—The Holy Spirit is *his own Spirit*.  
 Isn't that great?

And this Spirit, is as powerful as *wind and fire!*  
 Where do *you need* this Holy Spirit power in your life today?

In Acts 2 the Spirit shows up as *wind and tongues of fire*.  
 What if we could *tap into* that kind of power?

*What if we allowed* God's Spirit to work in us,  
 To do more than just talk to us on Sunday,  
 But to actually *change what we think, and do, and feel*  
 Monday through Sunday!

We *don't talk* about the Holy Spirit as often as we could—  
 Even though the Spirit is God, part of the Trinity  
 We claim belief in this Spirit  
 every time we say "Holy Ghost" in the *Apostle's Creed*.

And we know the Spirit came upon all of them at Pentecost,  
 Which was actually a *Jewish festival---Shavuot, 50 days after Passover*,  
 Commemorating the *Harvest*

and the giving of the 10 **commandments** on Mt. Sinai.  
It was a remembrance of God's presence, covenant, **and power**.

But instead of coming to celebrate the Harvest and the Law,  
the believers **became** the Harvest—with new gifts and new purpose!  
And Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled!

Jesus' followers in Jerusalem **could all speak---**  
Not about just anything ...but about **God's power**.  
Suddenly people from all over saw **simple Galileans speaking**  
**in all the foreign languages** represented in Jerusalem at the Festival.

These believers, who had lost their Lord and Savior on the cross,  
Now found themselves filled with **new gifts and new purpose**,  
They were becoming the people who would **share** the good news,  
They were being **used by God in new and amazing ways!**

And as a result, the **church was born**.  
And 3000 people were baptized as believers in Jesus Christ!  
And the word about Jesus spread and spread.

This happened through **people like us!**  
No previous foreign language experience,  
No special qualifications, except knowing Jesus.

And the miracle at Pentecost is just the **beginning** of the story—  
The entire Book of **Acts** tells about the power of the Holy Spirit  
in those early believers, and in the church.

In Acts we see the Spirit **guiding, leading, helping** them,  
giving them **courage, and hope**.

We see the power of an **earthquake** to open prison doors and chains for Paul.  
The power of **baptism** to change lives, in story after story.  
The power of including everyone in the kingdom,  
as Peter learns that God is for **all people**, not just the Jews.  
In Acts, we see the Spirit **connecting people and creating community**  
in totally new ways!

Isn't that a power we need in the church, today?

The miracle of Pentecost is like the Holy Spirit saying,  
 "Ladies and Gentlemen, **start your engines**"  
 because everyone's heart was ignited with the Spirit.

This is how Pentecost is the **birthday** of the church,  
 It put into motion everything we know about the body of Christ.

When the Spirit descended upon all those followers, and new converts in  
 Jerusalem, not only did they speak and hear the good news....  
 They created a **whole new way of living**--we see this in Acts 2:41-47.

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' **teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.** 43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in **common**...Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 **praising** God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord **added to their number** those who were being saved. When these believers gathered in Antioch they were called Christians.*

The Holy Spirit brought them **power**—  
 But it was a power that they **didn't control**.  
 It blew in like the **wind**...like the mighty breath of God.  
**We still can't control** the Spirit—it blows where it will!  
 So, how do we **tap into this power**—of Pentecost?

I read a neat analogy about the Spirit by Pastor Mark Batterson.  
 Have you ever heard of the name **Angelo Dundee**?  
 For more than two decades,  
 Angelo Dundee was in Muhammad Ali's corner, literally.  
 He was Ali's **cornerman in the boxing ring!**  
 Angelo Dundee described his job as a cornerman this way:  
*"When you're working with a fighter,  
 you're a surgeon, an engineer, and a psychologist."*  
 Mark Batterson, *If* (Baker Books, 2015), page 249

As followers of Jesus, we have something even better than a surgeon-engineer-psychologist in our corner—***we have the Holy Spirit!***  
When have you ***seen or felt that power?***

I see it when the ***children*** share their God-sightings at VBS or in worship!  
I sure felt that Holy Spirit power last week during the offertory,  
In that beautiful song, *Come to Jesus!*

What about you?

When have ***you experienced*** the power of the Holy Spirit?  
When have you received the ***courage and strength*** of the Spirit?  
We all need it, don't we?

In an article this week in Proverbs 31 ministries, Laura Bailey wrote this:  
*Too frequently we're just coasting along, **living on fumes** from day to day, then wondering why we aren't experiencing the optimal Christian life. We neglect to keep our spiritual tanks filled, and when we do, we refuel with quick prayers, a Bible verse or two, and a weekend church service, which isn't enough.* June 7, Proverbs 31 Ministries.

Don't we need the Holy Spirit, to ***keep our spiritual tanks filled?***  
Don't we need that incredible power, instead of just living on 'fumes'?  
Are you living on fumes right now?  
Or are you ready to be filled with power?

The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us all of our spiritual gifts!  
It's what makes us The Church.  
The Spirit gives us meaning and purpose,  
As the Spirit ***teaches, guides, comforts and counsels,***  
We can suddenly do things we could barely dream or imagine!  
Isn't that great news?

It's like the Rev. Joan Gray's great ***metaphor*** for Christian life.  
She says that we can be ***rowboats, or sailboats.***  
And the same applies to our ***church*** as a whole.

We can either ***use all of our energy*** trying to create our own purpose and do our own thing....  
like ***rowboats***....relying on our OWN power.

Or we can **let go and let God's Spirit** fill our sails,  
 We can be **sailboats**, relying on God's power!  
 We can **follow God and join what God is doing** in the world!

**Where are you right now-- are you a rowboat or a sailboat?**  
 How about letting go--and allowing The Spirit be the wind in your sails?  
 Carrying you exactly where you need to go!  
 How about letting the Spirit fill us—so we don't run on fumes?  
 Doesn't that sound great?

And all of it, is just a prayer away.  
 A request from our hearts, to God.  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

It is after all, the **Holy Spirit** who enables us to do **everything**  
 here at First Presbyterian Church of Owasso!  
 It's where we get our vision, our mission, our purpose,  
 and the power to be a mighty little church!  
 And today, Pentecost, is the day when we **remember and celebrate**  
 That power---that **wind in our sails!**  
 The question is, will we **allow** the Spirit's power to fill us?

This week on June 5<sup>th</sup>, the *Streams in the Desert* devotional read:  
*It is not within our power to create the wind or to change its direction,  
 but we can raise our sails to catch it when it comes.  
 We do not create electricity, yet we can tap into it....can't the same wonders be  
 done today that were done many years ago?*

*The answer to that is YES!*  
 God is just **waiting for us to call on the Holy Spirit**—  
 And receive it's power!  
 Will we? Will we **open our hearts and lives** to receive the Spirit?

Friends, hear the **Good News of the Gospel**,  
 the Holy Spirit is the **wind** that fills our sails,  
 And the **fire** that burns in our hearts.  
**Let's call on and receive** the power of the Holy Spirit!  
 And to that, all God's people said, Amen.