

“Is There Any Wind?”

Date: June 12, 2011

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: John 7:37-39; Acts 2:1-21

Theme: Prayer, power, Holy Spirit

Occasion: Pentecost Sunday

Thomas Kinsey, a pastor in New Hampshire, tells about a birthday card he sent his dad. It was his father’s 75th birthday. Kinsey was looking for that perfect card. Standing there in the card shop, he kept coming back to this one card. It had 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. His parents had never owned a boat or even shown any interest in boating. Still, there was something meaningful in that card that he was looking at.

Rev. Kinsey describes his father as a very simple man. His style is uncomplicated. Something about that card spoke to him of his father. So he bought it. As the pastor continued to look at the card he noticed that one of the boats was a sailboat and the other was a rowboat. Wanting to know something about who his father is, he wondered which of the two boats he would prefer.

So, when he mailed the card to his dad he included a note which said, “Dad, in your simple style of living, and with your ability to decide things that make the most sense, which boat would you choose?” A couple of weeks later he received this note from his father. (Obviously this was before cell phones or texting or Skype!)

His father wrote, “I noticed that the rowboat had no engine, but the sailboat had a sail. My question, though, before making my decision - Is there any wind?” A very good question, don’t you think?

Today we celebrate the birthday of the Church, known as Pentecost. And we

want to ask, Is there any wind? Must we spend the rest of our lives rowing, depending on **our** power alone? Or, might we put up our sails, and catch the wind of God? I ask you, “Is there any wind?”

On the first Pentecost there was plenty of wind, and I don't mean the wind of a tornado or a hurricane, or even the gentle breeze that blows across Presque Isle. I'm talking about the wind of the Holy Spirit. The disciples had been meeting in an Upper Room to pray, in Jerusalem, just as Jesus had instructed them to do. Early in the morning, they hear a loud sound coming from the sky. They had never heard anything like it before.

It was a transformative moment. Tongues of fire descended upon each person present. People began speaking in tongues. Others were talking in foreign languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability. The strange thing was, they were all being understood. God was being glorified.

Even the non-believers, the people who had gathered for the Jewish festival of Pentecost came out into the streets to see and hear what was going on. It was truly amazing; nothing like this had ever happened before. But a new wind was blowing - the wind of God's Holy Spirit.

God was sending His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, to live and dwell with His people. It was the Spirit of power, and the spirit of courage. Before the disciples had been afraid to speak. Now they openly preached Jesus, crucified, dead and risen. And, it is reported that 3,000 people were converted that very day. The wind of the Holy Spirit was blowing. God was doing a new thing in the world.

I have never, personally, experienced anything quite like that in my life. But I continue to preach Pentecost and the Holy Spirit, because I believe *that* is what the church of today is missing. If you and I haven't experienced the *power* of God's

Spirit, it's not because God is dead, or God's Spirit isn't active in the world any more.

It must have something to do with you and me, not with God. And so I preach Pentecost, hoping and believing that some day God's Spirit will fall on the Church in the same way that it did that first Pentecost.

Dr. Eric Funston, in a sermon he preached called, "The Winds of God," made these comments, and I agree with him. He said, "I really think we're afraid of power. Most folks I know, myself included, are afraid of power that is beyond ourselves." He went on to suggest that we're a lot like the Forest Service Official, down in New Mexico, who wanted a "control burn," but instead got a wildfire.

"Deep down, at some level, I think most of us know that the fire of God's Holy Spirit is not a controlled burn, but a wildfire. And wildfires change more than we have in mind. That's why we're so cautious about inviting the Holy Spirit into our lives."

I think there's a lot of truth in what Dr. Funston said. We want to be in control of the Church. We want to be in control of our personal lives. We want to know that things are being done decently and in good order. Those churches where people jump up and down, sing and shout and dance, they bother us Methodists. Because they seem so out of control.

But do you know what they've got that we don't? They've got wind. They've got the wind of the Holy Spirit blowing in their churches. The Holy Spirit is the power of God to transform lives, to renew cities and to change the world. But most of us are content with putting on our church calendars the same things that we did last year, because it's safe and comfortable.

But there isn't any wind in those kind of churches. Those churches are

pulling the weight of the ship on their own. They're rowing the boat of the Church, instead of putting up the sails of prayer, and seeking the power of the Holy Spirit. Mainline churches are busy, busy, busy. But I wonder, Is there any wind? Where is the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our churches today?

Do you remember that TV commercial a few years ago, I think it was for GE, advertising the fact that GE is also in the business of harnessing the power of wind? Early in the commercial you see a group of Vikings struggling to row this huge ship. The captain beats out the rhythm for the rowers on a giant drum. And these big, burly men are all rowing in unison, but you can tell it's a real chore.

Then, along comes another ship, gliding across the water. *This* boat has harnessed the power of the wind. Someone has discovered that if you sew sheets together and put them up in the air, it catches the wind and it will drive the boat faster and easier, than if you have to row it by yourself. The punch-line comes when a Viking is shown being pulled behind the sail boat on water skis. He's enjoying the ride.

Christians of the 21st Century, we've got to learn how to catch the wind. We've got to stop rowing the boats of our lives on our own power. We need to stop rowing the ship of the Church all by ourselves.

Certainly the energy of the flesh can operate rummage sales and hold church dinners. But we have no power to save souls, to transform lives or to change the world. We can be busy, busy, busy and still have no effect on the world, unless we catch the wind of God's power, the Holy Spirit.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot create the wind of God. God alone controls the wind. All that we can do is *catch* the wind. What we need to do is put up our sails. We do that spiritually by becoming a praying people. By that,

I do not mean the kind of casual praying that most of us are doing right now.

I mean the kind of prayer that takes time. If we want revival, if we want to know the power and the presence of Almighty God, we must pray fervently and passionately and frequently.

What would happen to our church, if we decided to tithe a tenth of our meeting time to prayer. If we have a church meeting that lasts an hour, at least 6 to ten minutes would be spent praying. No more bookend prayers, a quickie at the beginning and end of each meeting, when we ask God to bless what we want to do. But what if, instead, we took the time to wait and see what God would do?

What would happen if Christians came together to pray? What if we began to use our prayer chapel on a regular basis, for prayer? What if we began to have prayer meetings in different people's homes? What would happen if Christians spontaneously called a prayer meeting- for the purpose of getting together with other Christians to pray for God's Spirit to blow a fresh wind across our Church, and across our lives?

When God's Spirit blows we are refreshed, empowered, transformed. Is there any wind? Are people's lives being changed? Are there any healings - in body or spirit? Are people coming to faith? Is the Spirit of Jesus being felt? Is there any wind?

My friends, we can put up our sails and catch the wind of God. But do we want to? I'm here to tell you, on this Pentecost Sunday, that the Spirit of God, the mighty wind of God, is available to all who desire.

So, for those who want it, pray for it. Amen.