

Scripture: Acts 2:1-21

Text: John 3:8

Message: Fresh Wind Blowing

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Pentecost

Remember the wind storm from a few weeks ago? The wind blew strong in this area, and also in Southern Ontario. When we visited my in-laws in Southern Ontario this past week, we saw how the wind had pushed out a wall on his large implement shed on the farm. Wind has power to blow over trees or tear a roof off a house. And there's nothing you can do about the wind.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew language of the Old Testament and the Greek language of the New Testament each use one word for *wind* and for *Spirit*. Jesus, in speaking with Nicodemus in John 3, says that the Spirit is like the wind. Then we read that on Pentecost there was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind from heaven which signified the coming of the Spirit.

Let us use our familiarity with wind to learn more about the Holy Spirit as a fresh wind blowing in our lives, in the church, and in the world.

To start off, let us make one thing clear: the Spirit is *not* wind. It's only the same word used for each. The Spirit is a person, like the Father and the Son. In that personal way the Spirit lives in us, affects us, guides us, directs us. How he does that compares to the wind.

The wind blows wherever it pleases. Have you ever wondered where the wind comes from? Where does it start? Where is it going? Where does it stop? How does it start and stop? How does it move from one place to another?

There are definite scientific explanations of what wind is and how it blows. Yet there is also an element of mystery surrounding wind. How do the particular atmospheric conditions make wind? And how does it continue to blow over such a vast area, or in one area and not another?

A similar mystery surrounds the work of the Holy Spirit. In one of our hymns, we sing: "I know not how the Spirit moves, convincing us of sin, revealing Jesus through the Word, creating faith in him." Our human minds cannot fully comprehend the person and work of the Holy Spirit. He is present with us this morning, but no one can see him. You may feel his presence, hear him, delight in him, but no level of intelligence can ever completely figure the

Spirit out.

It is a mystery how the eternal God can have contact with finite human beings. Or how the God who is everywhere and fills all the heavens with his glory lives in a person as in a temple. We can ask and search. But we will never fully comprehend the mystery of the work of the Spirit.

We rejoice to know Jesus as Saviour. We are thankful to be born again, renewed to live a new life in Christ. We praise God for his Spirit whom we know works in our hearts. But *how* he does it remains a mystery, like the blowing wind. By faith we believe it is true. In faith we accept this mystery and submit to the Spirit's indwelling, without demanding an explanation. We allow the Spirit to blow or work in our lives wherever he pleases.

Who can create a wind? We have fans which move air. We have wind tunnels used to test structures before they are built. But who can make the wind to blow on a humid summer day? Not even our elected leaders in Toronto or Ottawa can legislate the wind to blow. We are helpless to change its direction or to stop it or to tell it to blow somewhere else. The wind blows because God made this world with wind that blows.

So it is with the Spirit of God. Everything which the Spirit does is in no way tied to the demands or commands of any human person. You and I cannot tell the Holy Spirit what to do. It is only God and his sovereign will who directs the Spirit. We see God at work in us, in his church, in others through the Spirit's work.

The wind also blows with different force. One day it may blow so hard it knocks over houses and barns and trees. Another day it may be a gentle breeze, quietly stirring the leaves in the trees, a welcome relief on a hot summer day.

The Spirit also works with different force. For some people, the Spirit may blow like a chaotic tornado, churning within them, turning their life upside down. Perhaps the Spirit is blowing hard in your life right now. You are battling against him, trying to keep what is precious to you. But the Spirit blows and tears away, convicting of sin, undermining the false gods we have set up. Surrender to the Spirit. He is making you into a new person. He is a fresh wind, the refiner's fire, blowing and burning what is unnecessary or what hinders a relationship with God. What he takes away, you don't need.

For others the Spirit is a gentle breeze. There is no distinct moment of conversion or surrender to Christ. You don't know exactly when the Spirit came into your life. You simply

noticed his gentle influence. You remember childhood prayers when you felt the Lord's presence. You remember the joy of hearing familiar stories from the Bible and noticing something new and meaningful. You never really battled with God, but your trust grew stronger. That is the work of the Spirit, gently blowing, leading to a firm faith in Jesus Christ.

The wind also blows in different directions and in different places. The strong winds that blew down homes in Southern Ontario did not blow that hard in Brockville. One day the wind may be from the north, another day from the south.

The Spirit also comes from different directions and influences people differently. The Spirit may seem to blow harder with more radical evidence of his presence in one church more than another.

The Spirit may work more powerfully through one individual or another. The Spirit may use words from this pulpit to convict one person of sin. He may use the words of a GEMS or Cadet counselor or Bible study leader to challenge someone else to repent. The Spirit may use one individual to organize a particular program to benefit many others. He may use the ministry of a group of individuals to bring one person to Christ.

The Spirit does not work exactly the same way in every place or situation. We cannot predict the Spirit's movement or work. Nor do we all have to act in exactly the same way to prove that the Spirit is working. The Spirit works in different ways. What is important is that the Spirit's influence is present and that we recognize that it is the Spirit at work.

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear the sound of the wind, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. You cannot see the wind, but you can see its effects. You can see leaves moving or dust blowing. You can feel relief on a hot day or see the devastating effects of a tornado or hurricane.

So also you cannot see the Spirit, but you can see the results of the Spirit's presence and influence. The Spirit might demolish false hopes and shaky foundations built on material wealth or the thinking that we are good enough by ourselves. The Spirit may rebuild a life on Jesus Christ as the only true foundation.

The Spirit may blow through us to clean out all which is dead to sin and refresh us with new life in Christ. That life is evident in the joy we have in life. Our lives show love to others, even those with whom we disagree. We are at peace with God, others and ourselves. The Spirit helps us to be patient when other people don't operate the way we expect them to or

want them to. And so on, the fruit of the Spirit is evidence that the Spirit is at work in us, even though we cannot see the Spirit.

We can hear Peter's words at Pentecost as evidence of the fresh wind of the Spirit blowing among us. "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." This is what will happen when God's Spirit is poured out.

Do we hear our sons and daughters speaking the word of God to each other, to the world? Do we encourage our children and youth to give voice to the Spirit's working? Are we listening to our sons and daughters, our children, as they speak and act from the power of the Spirit in their lives?

Are our young men and women seeing visions? Do they see great potential for their gifts and for the church? Do they see visions of a growing kingdom of God in our community? Are we giving them a place to express those visions?

Do our old men and women dream dreams? Do they also come up with great ideas and plans for the glory of God and his kingdom? Or are they retired and set aside because of their age? Are those with youthful energy willing to work at the dreams of our older men and women?

The Spirit of God is a fresh wind blowing. We cannot ignore it. We must not try to stop it. We must let the Spirit blow in and through our lives. We must look for signs of his blowing, believing the great potential of what the Spirit can do!

Let the Spirit convict us of sin and change our hearts to a renewed commitment to Christ. Let the Spirit heal broken relationships and lead us to greater enthusiastic service for Christ.

The next time you notice the wind, think of the Holy Spirit. How is the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit blowing his power in your life?

Amen.