

*Lord, open our ears to hear your Word spoken to us; Open our hearts to be changed by Your Spirit. Amen.*

Wouldn't faith be easier if we could see God?

Of course, then it wouldn't be faith – faith, by definition,

is the conviction of things unseen. Once we see, it's no longer faith.

And wouldn't faith be easier if we could feel God?

Sometimes we do, in moments, but they are fleeting and subjective.

Jesus said that the reality of God is such that we cannot perceive it with our

intellect and our five senses. Our fleshly human nature doesn't get us there.

We can only perceive God using our spirits –

or more accurately, allowing God's Spirit to interact with our spirits.

This is what Jesus tells Nicodemus,

a Jewish leader who was intrigued by what he heard and saw about Jesus.

God's Spirit is like the wind, he said – you hear it, you see trees and grasses moving,

you may even feel it against your face or your back –

but you don't know where it comes from or where it goes.

That's how it is for those who are born of the Spirit.

And we, my friends, are born of God's Spirit – that's what happens in baptism.

How much play we give the Spirit in running us is up to us, but God is here, in us.

I would argue that is our spiritual work – to allow the Holy Spirit more air play,

more space, so that we begin to operate out of our Spirit-selves,

not our human selves, what Jesus called "flesh."

Wind is a perfect image for the life of God, so hard to see but so present.

We can't see the wind blowing around us but we know what wind feels like –

what if we trained ourselves to think of God every time we felt the wind?

What if we stopped and talked with God? That's called prayer...

The wind of God is the breath of God, which moved over the waters

when the world was formed, which animates artists and thinkers and mystics.

In a sense, we have the breath of God in us in the Holy Spirit.

What if we learned to move on that wind rather than our own?

On one of the days of my 5-day hike in Scotland and England,  
I spent an afternoon crossing moors – and man, was there a wind.  
We looked it up later – 33 miles an hour. Same fierce wind at our backs  
drove us across the mudflats to Lindesfarne when we crossed to Holy Isle.  
Being pushed along by the wind is a great way to think of ministry.  
I spend so much time trying to do things on my own effort – and time and again  
I've heard that holy whisper saying God just needs me to let God work through me.  
When I do that, when I stop striving, or just trust in something I know God wants  
to do, the outcomes are so amazing, and I am energized, not depleted.  
When I try to do it on my own strength, I get tired and frustrated.

We need to apply this principle as churches – asking God what  
God wants to do through us, not just coming up with bright ideas;  
inviting the Spirit to blow through us to refresh the world.  
What projects or needs feel really insurmountable to us right now?  
Have we asked whether those are God's projects?  
Have we asked God to do them through us?

Wind can be destructive, as we know, but it can also be generative.  
It is the wind scattering seeds that causes trees and plants to grow,  
sometimes far away from where they started.  
As we allow God's Spirit to rest in us, work through us, blow us along,  
we will also find our mission spreading, sometimes where we can't imagine.  
It has spread up to Canada and down to Florida; and all around our region.  
When we started giving money and then food to folks at the Thunderbird Motel,  
gradually others in the region started to help and now the Wayside Food Bank  
drops off food there. That's an example of seeds spreading.  
We started a nightly prayer meeting when the Covid lockdown began,  
just to stay in touch. Three years and counting, Night Prayers is now lay-led  
with a stable community of participants and pray-ers – and always room for you.  
What other seeds might we spread as we allow God's Spirit to lead us?

Let the wind of God cool and refresh you.  
Let the wind of God fill and renew you.  
Let the wind of God inspire and move you into mission.  
Breathe on us, breath of God, and blow us into your service.  
Amen.

## Genesis 1:1-4

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

## PSALM 104:1-4, 10-13

- <sup>1</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great.  
You are clothed with honor and majesty,  
<sup>2</sup> **wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent,**  
<sup>3</sup> you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,  
**you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind,**  
<sup>4</sup> you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.  
<sup>10</sup> **You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills,**  
<sup>11</sup> giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst.  
<sup>12</sup> **By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;**  
**they sing among the branches.**  
<sup>13</sup> From your lofty abode you water the mountains;  
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

## John 3:5-9

Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'