

## SERMON

Pastor Cris Frigm

What happens when the Spirit blows through? What does it feel like, what does it look like when the breath of God moves through our work, our lives, our community? It's the question of the day and it's the question that has come up throughout the history of the people of God. What happens when we let the Spirit of God work in us?

Of course, the challenge is always recognizing what the Spirit is doing and **how** it is at work in our lives. For instance, I think the Spirit was at work as Mike was selecting hymns for this morning. We could've started worship with a different Spirit-centered song that goes like this...

It's a beautifully written song and it's so calming. There's a call to movement there... "stir me from placidness" but it's done nicely, sweetly. But we didn't sing that, we sang...

*Refrain*

Spir - it, Spir - it of gen-tle-ness, blow through the wil-der-ness  
call-ing and free; Spir - it, Spir - it of rest-less-ness,  
stir me from plac-id-ness, wind, wind on the sea.  
God of tempest, God of whirlwind,  
as on Pentecost descend!

I'm not a soloist, so I'm not singing anymore...

Drive us out from sheltered comfort;  
past these walls your people send!  
Sweep us into costly service,  
there with Christ to bear the cross,

God of blazing, God of burning...God of earthquake...God of passion, God unsleeping... Rouse us from content with evil; claim us for your kingdom's work...

**That's** a call to action. That's the Spirit lighting a fire in us so that we are ready to boldly proclaim the good news to a world that doesn't really want to hear it.

In 2006, Cole was finishing 1<sup>st</sup> grade, Syd was finishing pre-school and Laurel and I were trying to figure out what was next. I had been an at-home-dad for seven years but with the beginning of full-time school for them, we had to figure out what I was going to do with all this free time I was going to have.

We thought I was going to flip houses. I love to remodel, Laurel was working in mortgages, so she had all these connections with realtors. It would give me the flexibility to be with the kids as needed. It seemed perfect for where we were in life.

And then Laurel and I were standing in the church parking lot of Evangelical Lutheran in Frederick and Pastor Bert Lane asked me, "have you ever thought about doing ministry?" The three of us had been talking about something happening at the church related to family activities. He didn't know I had spent two years in youth ministry, four summers in outdoor ministry, and several years volunteering at our previous church. He just heard something in our conversation that led to that question.

Laurel and I looked at each other and said, "okay." That fast, in what became a whirlwind of major life changes, the Holy Spirit – speaking through Pastor Bert – had blown us way off course for what we thought life was going to look like. I had foolishly said, almost 10 years earlier while I was doing youth ministry, that I would never be a pastor. And the Spirit laughed. The Spirit hovered. The Spirit waited to unleash a tempest, a whirlwind that has brought me to Middletown and Taneytown, Maryland, to this place, to this time, where we get to work together to proclaim God's love and peace to the world.

The disciples came back from the Mount of Olives, having seen Jesus ascend to an as-yet-unclear reign in heaven, they replenished their numbers, they prayed, and they waited as they had been instructed. According to the story we have, they waited 10 days from the Ascension until the Jewish festival of Shavuot which happened 50 days after Passover. At this time, it was a spring harvest festival, and a time that Jewish people were expected to pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

So all these Jewish people are there...some of them, who had walked with Jesus on this earth were ready for that call to action. And it wasn't the "Spirit of gentleness" that showed up. It was the breath of God blowing through the entire house as a violent wind. It

was fire appearing – exactly what it looked like, we don't know. But fire rested on them to give them the words they needed to become the apostles they needed to be.

They took in the power of the Spirit and proclaimed the message of the gospel to the multitudes. And were met with sneers and accusations. Not deterred by the doubt they encountered, Peter stood up to interpret what was happening and grounded what was happening in the stories that the crowd already knew. The prophet had told them that the young would see visions, the old would dream, and the Spirit would be poured out to bring the salvation of the Lord to everyone.

I doubt the disciples, or the crowd, could have possibly imagined exactly what that would look like. Even with the teachings of Jesus fresh in their minds, even with their understanding of the stories of their faith tradition, even with the fire of the Spirit at work, it would take time and work to figure out what it meant to call on the name of the Lord. It would take centuries, millennia, of God continuing to stir the pot, to shake us loose, to break chains for us to be able to gather in this place today and know that the Spirit is alive right here as we keep trying to figure out what comes next.

I recently read this history of St. Paul's. It reads much like every other church history I've ever read. Congregational histories do a good job of chronicling the building of buildings and calling of pastors. They often include a snapshot of the ministries that have formed the life of the congregation.

They don't always pay attention to how it all happens. They don't often describe the way the Holy Spirit has made it all come together. But we trust that it was happening. As the blossoming congregation found a property to build on, we trust that the Holy Spirit guided them to making the right decisions. As the congregation developed out of and through Lutheran Campus Ministry at UD, the Holy Spirit brought leaders to have an impact. As the congregation started feeding the hungry in partnership with Lutheran Community Services and Hope Dining Room, the Holy Spirit empowered the ministry to care for many. The Holy Spirit was at work as the congregation evolved and thrived with the surrounding community.

And that's just in the first 50 years (the history is almost 25 years old). There are plenty more examples of the Holy Spirit leading sanctuary renovations and new feeding ministries and, and, and...The Holy Spirit continues to breathe through us to bring God's Kingdom to life.

The Holy Spirit keeps us grounded in the stories of God's love. And the Holy Spirit is at work to help us pay attention to what God might do with and through us. We continue to

be stirred up by the Holy Spirit so that we thrive in the whirlwind of life happening all around us. We continue to listen to what the Spirit is saying as we celebrate change and new life. We remain grounded in the truth of God's loving embrace, trusting that God's covenant promise is for us...is for you. Forevermore. Amen.