

**5/23/2021**  
**Acts 2:1-13**

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."'''

### **Pentecost**

In seminary, as with college or high school, students tend to pick "favorite professors." Did you have some favorite teachers when you were in school? I sure did. And one of my all time favorite professors (and honestly many people's favorite professors) was **Dr. Steve Seamands**. Dr. Seamands' classes always blurred the line between teaching and preaching – while sitting in class I often would be writing notes and then suddenly realize I was no longer writing anything because I was so caught up in the beautiful truths that Dr. Seamands was sharing. And most of the time my heart was changed for the better after leaving a class of Dr.

Seamands. He just had this way of communicating the Gospel in and incredibly simple yet powerful way that was absolutely compelling.

I got to take a few classes with Dr. Seamands and one of them was called “Basic Christian Doctrine.” Let me tell ya – even though the word “basic” is in the name of that class, there was a lot that we covered about Christian Doctrine in that class. It was one of my favorites though because we got to go in depth into topics of Christianity – both topics that I knew a lot about and topics I didn’t know a lot about. And I have to say that the Holy Spirit was and is one of those topics that I continue to learn more and more about because God’s Spirit is sometimes very difficult to understand. And when I think about God’s Holy Spirit, I realize that 90% of what I do understand about the Spirit is from the teaching of Dr. Seamands. And so today and for the next 2 weeks I’d like to share with you what I’ve learned about the Holy Spirit’s wide range of work, represented and explained in the three events of Pentecost – as told by one of my favorite professors, Dr. Seamands. Are you ready!?

The three events of Pentecost that we see in today’s scripture from Acts 2 are **wind, fire, and speaking in tongues** (or other languages). The first sign, wind, is found in verse 2 when it says, “**Suddenly** a sound like the

blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.” Just as I talked with the kiddos a few minutes ago, **wind or air** is such a great symbol to help us understand the character and action of God’s Holy Spirit. In fact, Jesus used the idea of wind to explain the Spirit when he was talking with a guy named Nicodemus in John chapter 3. Jesus said to him, “**The wind blows** wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” And like I was sharing with the kids, the reason that wind is such a good way of thinking of God’s Spirit is that we can’t see the wind usually, but we can see the effects of the wind. We can see it blow in the trees or on a field of tall grass or when there’s a big storm and we see lots of tree branches on the ground and we can see our chests and bellies move up and down when we breathe. As Jesus said, You can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.” We can’t see God’s Spirit but we can sure see the effects of the Spirit in our own lives when we come to know Jesus, when we continue to learn and love Jesus and grow into his likeness every day, when we can share the good news with people, when we do things in love for others like building ramps, volunteering at the food pantry, or show kindness to someone who isn’t showing kindness to us. Even though we cannot

actually see God's Holy Spirit, we *can* see the effects and the evidences of the Spirit.

Even though it was the day of Pentecost that Jesus' early followers finally experienced the promise of God's Spirit among them after Jesus ascended, this idea of God's Holy Spirit is no new idea. In fact, God's Spirit shows up in the very first sentence of the Bible! **Genesis 1:1-2** says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." It was through God's Spirit that God created all of creation out of the formless and empty darkness. God's Spirit brought about the very life that began all of creation and continues to sustain you and me through the power of breath. In fact, for the Jewish people, the people who Jesus comes from and the people who complied the Old Testament, for the Jewish people, that's what God's Holy Spirit does – it gives life just like breath gives life.

And for the Jewish people, there is a word that means both "breath" and "spirit" and let me tell ya – it's a fun word! The word is **ruach** (gotta clear out your throat there at the end of the word). When we look at Genesis 1:1-2 again, it reads, "**In the beginning God** created the heavens

and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit (RUACH) of God was hovering over the waters.”

**There's another** scripture in the Old Testament in the Book of Ezekiel that showcases this word RUACH perfectly. This guy named Ezekiel was a prophet of God and as a prophet he would see visions and then interpret those visions to God's people to either give them warnings or encouragement. In one of Ezekiel's visions, God showed him a valley of dry bones and as Ezekiel looked at the valley of bones he heard God ask him, "Ezekiel, can these bones live again?" And in this vision God did bring these bones back together again into bodies with muscles and skin and then God breathed life with His RUACH back into those bodies and the people came alive again! This scripture from Ezekiel would have been well known and readily memorable to Jesus' first followers since they had grown up learning about God's prophets throughout the ages.

**So when this** mighty wind came from heaven and filled the whole room where they were sitting, the sign and symbol of wind meant something to these followers of Jesus. The wind meant that new life was coming just like the creation of the world that was brought up from the

waters at creation and just like the life that was breathed back into the valley of dry bones. God's Spirit, God's breath, brings forth life in the world and in you and me.

As some of you know, Dusty and I love to **kayak**. In fact our first date was kayaking down a river in Kentucky where we lived. Kayaking is a lot of fun...but if you've ever kayaked before, depending on the type of water you're on, it can be a pretty good work out. Paddling your way around everywhere can get pretty exhausting. I know my arms feel good and sore after a day of kayaking on the water. Unless you find a current in a river, kayaking is pretty much all up to you and the power of your arms – how long can they last before they get tired from rowing? That's the question.

Quite a different experience on the water is **sail boating** – has anyone ever been on a sailboat? I've never been on one, but I would love to go. Sailboats, unlike kayaks or canoes, aren't powered by anyone rowing and getting exhausted. The power of a sailboat comes from the wind, right? The person in the boat has to figure out which way to put the sails, but as soon as they do, they're off to the races and they can sit back and enjoy the ride while the wind does the work.

I wonder today, what you would say if I asked you **what kind** of boat does your life look like right now. Does your life right now feel like you're rowing and rowing and rowing and just getting more and more exhausted? Friends, the Christian life not about rowing until we can't paddle anymore. The Christian life is about allowing God's Holy Spirit to guide and direct us. Sometimes we might need to do the work of adjusting things in our lives to catch the wind a little better, but then there comes a point when we learn to trust God and the direction of His Spirit.

How might we adjust our sails so that God can fill them up? Some little but powerful things called the **Means of Grace**. The means of grace are things like Bible study, prayer, taking communion, tithing or offering, fellowship with other Christians, and worship. These actions that were called the means of grace by John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, because they are means through which (in other words: ways or channels) that we can do to position our sails so that God's grace, God's Spirit, can fill us up and work in us.

**Maybe there's** someone here today who needs to be reminded that rowing and rowing, trying to force your way into God's will for your life will never work. Or maybe someone is here today who has been trying to get

closer to God but it never seems to feel like it happens. Or maybe there's someone here today who is skeptical about all this talk of God's Spirit and doesn't know if God can actually work in your life or in the world. If that's you today, know that you're not alone. Know that every Christian is at some point along the same journey and we're all learning how to live lives in which we can set our paddles down and allow the God's holy spirit wind work in our lives. We're all figuring this out together and that's the beauty of the church. You and I are a group of people who all attempt at positioning our sails so that God can work in us. That's why it's so important to be a part of a church family – none of us can sail on our own. We need each other to encourage and help along the journey.

And so in that spirit, we will be having another time of prayer after the service. \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be up front again to offer prayer for you today and know that you can come forward for prayer about anything you're searching healing for, but particularly I want to invite us to reflect on what kind of life we live currently – a rowboat or a sailboat life. And if God's Spirit convicts you today to shift your life, if you're desiring more, then we would love to pray with you up here.

Again like last week we will be singing the final song together and then after the benediction we'll be up front here to pray with you.

Let's enter our time of reflection and worship with prayer.