

Title: Catch the Wind

Preaching: Randy Spleth, Senior Minister

Scripture: [John 14:15-18, 25-27](#)

Text: [Acts 2:1-17, 21](#)

E-mail: [Randy Spleth](#)



Those who participated in our Keenager trip last week are in a better position to start this sermon than I am. They went to the Fowler Wind farm, the largest wind farm in Indiana. It is actually the largest in the Midwest. Ten years ago, it was just another stretch of flat farmland used to grow corn and soybeans. But since 2008, boosted by federal and local tax incentives, wind turbines have become an increasingly prominent part of the northern Indiana landscape. One need only to drive north on 65 to Chicago to see the landscaped dotted with turbines.

There is a reason. It's windy there, windier than the Windy City, with speeds averaging 16-18 mph, a full 5 miles faster than the Chicago average. But those big wind turbines aren't without controversy. Opposition has cropped up around Indiana, with residents voicing fears of decreased property values, increased noise levels, and potential damage to wildlife such as bats and birds. And then there is the fact that while it seems that the wind is always blowing there, it really isn't and wasn't last Friday.¹

Knowing all of these pitfalls, scientists are trying to figure out a way to provide more efficient, consistent and low impact ways to capture the wind. One of them is high altitude wind turbines. Think of a blimp or a kite with turbines sent up into the jet stream, so high that cruising airliners would have to steer around them. The turbines are tethered sending electricity back down the wire, generating 50 times more current than ground-based turbines.

There are challenges but the basic principle is this. To catch the wind, you have to put yourself where it is blowing. That's the scientific principle behind wind energy. But you could also call it the Pentecost paradigm. You have to put yourself in the right place to catch the wind. In this case, the wind is the Holy Spirit. Captured by the first disciples, it empowered them to become the dynamic Christian community which launched the church and

spread the gospel. Look at their story and you'll find a blueprint for how to catch the wind and what it offers.

It begins in the community because "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place" when "...the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting." (Acts 2:1, 2b) There was a reason they were together. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, "...he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father." (Acts 1:4) He made the promise on his last night before his crucifixion, promising not to abandon them but to ask God to send the counselor, the advocate, the Spirit of Truth. I promise Jesus said, I won't leave you orphaned. (John 14:17) So don't leave Jerusalem but wait and "you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:5)

So between the promise that Jesus made and the challenge to stay together that Jesus makes, they stay together. That's significant. If Peter had been in Capernaum, James and John fishing on the Sea of Galilee, Andrew in Cana and the other eight scattered across the country, they couldn't catch the wind of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was a communal experience. It was because they were together that "...all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit."

Waiting together is a challenge today because we have become so individualistic in our spirituality. In the past, people would routinely take their spiritual search to church and looked to the shared experiences with worshipers, their pastors, scripture, and tradition for guidance. But somewhere along the way, slowly but sure an idea has become prevalent. Somehow, we have gotten the idea that Christianity is a personal and private religion. Surveys reveal that today, many people identify themselves as Christian but also say they are spiritual, not religious. For them, Christianity has become a solitary experience.²

But that's not what Jesus taught. The first thing Jesus does is to build his community of disciples. And the last thing he does is tell them to stay together. The Christian faith was and is created to be lived out in community. The truth is that we need each other. We need community if we're going to be disciples of Jesus. It is only when we are "all together in one place" that we can catch the wind of the Holy Spirit and when we do, we can begin to use the gifts that God wants to give us.

The first gift of the Holy Spirit is communication. They could talk to each other. Our lesson says, "...suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability." (Acts 2:2-4)

They caught the wind and became an international community. For a moment, there wasn't a need for translators. This amazed the devout Jews from every nation who were living in the city because they knew that the apostles were Galileans, men not famous for their foreign language abilities. You know the riddle. I think about it every time I travel to Europe with Ann. What do you call a person who speaks three languages? Trilingual. What do you call a person who speaks two languages? Bilingual. What do you call a person who speaks one language? American.

Like the Galileans, we aren't bilingual or trilingual. Those first followers of Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic, perhaps some Hebrew. But Pentecost was a truly multi-lingual because Acts says, "... each one heard them speaking in the native language of each." (Acts 2:6) Acts describes the list of people as literally a global community of people from places north and south, east and west, literally a map of their known world. Every country was represented, which meant that there were far more languages present than the disciples could represent. Communication wasn't just about speaking a language; it was also about hearing. Catching the wind had a complementary effect, helping some to speak and others to hear.

Speaking and hearing today is just an app away. You can purchase an instant translation app and little earbuds that can immediately create a Pentecost language experience. But ultimately, the Pentecost dialog wasn't really about linguistics. It was about communication, listening and hearing each other. They were having a conversation with each other, not at each other. They were honoring each other in their communication, even though they were from different races and place, even though they looked different, dressed different and were from different countries and even had different attitude and understandings about the world.

Respectful communication which honors diversity, which honors different origins and different perspectives is needed to today more than ever. Civil discourse in the public sector has so deteriorated that true communication that can create understanding is largely gone. Speaking and listening with respect seems as distant as an ancient land.

We can't control the words and actions of those in political power or civic society but we can control how we speak and how we act. We can catch the wind and rediscover the power of Godly communication which honors and respects everyone. At the very least, it will embrace the integrity of our

faith; but it could impact the soul of our community and nation and be a start to return to a more civil, respectful community.

To do so, will require courage which is another gift of Pentecost. Acts tells us that there were a few residents of Jerusalem who sneered saying "They are filled with new wine." (Acts 2: 13) Sneers, jeers, and first-century name-calling; they are drunk. They didn't want to hear the message of the Galileans so, even though they heard and understood, they tried to write it off as drunken babble. But Peter catches the power of the wind and begins to preach with understanding and insight. This is the one who constantly stuck his foot in his mouth saying the wrong thing. Remember, this is the one that a little over 50 days earlier had denied the Lord, running away like a coward. The wind of the Holy Spirit is so powerful that it fills Peter with courage. He speaks up, saying, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose." (Acts 2:14-15)

It is a remarkable part of this story. Peter didn't say the wrong thing or shy away from conflict. Instead, he stood up to his detractors and began to preach with courage and conviction, saying that with the sending of the Holy Spirit was a fulfillment of ancient prophecy, that "...this was what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh'" (Acts 2:16-17a) With courage, Peter makes a strong stand for what God was doing in the world at that particular moment.

When we catch the wind, we are challenged to do the same, especially when people dismiss the church or the practice of faith. As Christians, our job is to show courage about describing where we see God active in the world. We don't have to engage in philosophical arguments with those who are cynics about ministry or agnostic in belief. Rather, our challenge is to point to what God is doing in the lives of individuals, church, community, and world, the God-moments of the in breaking of the Holy Spirit.

When estranged family members come together and there is reconciliation, the wind of Pentecost has been caught. When addiction is put aside and sobriety is embraced, it is with the power of God's Spirit. When unexpected healing occurs or warring factions make peace, those are God-moments which come from catching the win.

Pentecost always arrives with a question. Are we telling people where God is active in our lives and community? Do we have the courage to tell people our stories about how we are changed because we follow him? Peter

courageously points out what he saw God doing at that moment in his world and so should we.

The results can be powerful. Peter preaches and 3,000 new believers come forward, accept Jesus, were baptized and they too were filled with the Holy Spirit. How did that happen? It happened with Peter's clarity. Clarity is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

When the apostle Peter spoke to the crowd, he didn't invent a whole new set of Holy Scriptures. Instead, he clarified a passage from Joel that had been confusing before but now made perfect sense. He provided a commentary on this Scripture lesson that awakened people to the power of the Holy Spirit and the significance of God's Son, Jesus.

Making the message of the Bible clear is one of the most important ways in which we position the church to catch the wind of Pentecost. Peter did this well in his sermon to the people of Jerusalem, by showing that God's promise to pour out his Spirit was coming true all around them, and the day was dawning in which "...everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21) This was the greatest clarification of all, because it made clear that the name of the Lord is Jesus, and everyone who calls on him shall be saved.

Salvation is no longer limited to the Jews. Gentiles can be saved as well. It's a surprising twist in the biblical story, and Peter suddenly makes clear what God is doing.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Everyone shall be forgiven and made right with God. All they have to do is call Jesus their Lord. For years, people didn't know what the prophet Joel was talking about. But Peter made it clear.

On Pentecost, we remember the gift of the Holy Spirit and disciples who catch the wind and launch the church. They do so by communicating with courage and clarity a message of God's love for all who call upon the name of the Lord.

Can you imagine being a part of something like that? Can you imagine catching it, using it for your life and the life of this community? It's possible. You simply have to place yourself in the Pentecost paradigm. You have to put yourself in position to catch the wind.

¹ Passing Wind, July 30, 2018. <https://orangebeanindiana.com/2018/07/30/wind-turbines-indiana/>

² Catching the Wind. Homiletics. May 11, 2008. Retrieved by subscription.