

“May our meditations be pleasing to God,
for we rejoice in the Lord!”

Amen!

The child wandered through the marketplace.

Street vendors surrounded him.

Musicians played and people engaged in conversation.

Everything was filled with noise and
it seemed that everyone had something
important to say and attention to command.

“Come see this!” A voice would call out.

“No, come over here!” Another would shout.

“Listen to me!” Said a third voice.

Eli tried to visit and listen to them all,
but soon found himself exhausted and confused,
not knowing who to trust.

He left the market square and found
a quiet place on a hill outside of town.

He sat and waited.

At first, the quiet was as
uncomfortable as the noise,

but then something happened.

In the midst of the gentle breeze,
sounds of nature, and
steady breathing -

he heard (or felt is a better expression)
a different voice.

“You don’t need to follow every voice that calls you,”
it said.

“Just follow me.”

The voice was tender and clear.

Eli knew it to be trustworthy because of
the peace he felt. (Pause)

In our assigned readings for today,
Pentecost Sunday, we read a variety of
accounts which report on the receiving of
the Holy Spirit.

In the witness from Acts, we are caught up
in the awe and wonder of an amazing,
and noisy event.

Noise, like the sound of violent winds
within a house and then exhilaration as
the tongues of fire flickered over
people speaking different languages.

It's like an occasion of God shocking and awe-ing
the disciples and the crowd.

We read then the brave witness of Peter
standing up to address the crowd to bear
witness to Jesus.

We mustn't forget this miracle because
it was just 50 some-days ago when Peter
denied the Lord three times.

Awe and wonder, of the Holy Spirit, indeed. (Pause)

But in our gospel there's a different kind of
testimony revealing the arrival of the Holy Spirit.
The disciples are hiding, alone, locked away
in grief and in fear.

The account in John chapter 20, occurred 3 days
after Jesus' crucifixion and burial.

When Jesus appeared quietly and peacefully
to breathe life into his troubled and scared crew.

Where Acts' witness was filled with awe and wonder,
John's account is filled with intimacy and tenderness.

Varieties of the manifestation of the Spirit of God.

The life-giving breath that filled the lungs of
the followers of Jesus, hearkens us back to

the witness in Genesis where God breathed life
into the first human beings. (Pause)

Pentecost is a day of celebration for
the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

While we do this celebration,
we also comprehend that the Spirit of God,
the Spirit of Truth,
has been amongst creation always.

Even at creation when the "Wind of God
swept over the face of the waters."

It seems that even the Bible cannot agree
with itself about explanations of the Spirit and

our dance with God.

For some, the contradictions within
the Bible are problematic, but such is
the way when human hands work
to explain and witness to ways

that God moves throughout the cosmos,
interacting with creation. (Pause)

All of this beckons us to place ourselves
in the locked, upper room.

Crowded and intimate, familiar and strange.

In the midst of worry and grief
we too may find a familiar voice saying,

“Peace I leave you; my peace I give to you.”

This familiar refrain from the lips of Jesus
was present in the baptism of Zoe today.

As she cried and cooed,
the vibrations of her breath
gave and carried the physical reality
that breath is not empty.

Author and pastor Cody Sanders writes,

“Made of air, breath is not empty it is laden
with molecules, moisture, and...
the breath of other creatures.

Pumped by lungs, breathing is
muscular and emotional.”

Loud and soft. (Pause)

We recall our baptisms too, even if
we cannot remember them.

We recall God’s desire to be intimate with creation
and we know there were the times when God
went the way of violent wind and loud noise.

Both manifestations of the Spirit are true,
which do you need today?

A strong jolt or gentle touch?

A quiet whisper or a loud shout?

Whatever you need, today is the day to allow
the imagination of the familiar

awe and wonder of Pentecost in Acts, and
to attend to the intimacy of John’s scene:

breath of new life breathed upon those

huddled in the shadows of death;

the Spirit received, then and today, into bodies
tensed in fear and worry, now releasing us
into possibility and hope. (Pause)

Today, I need Jesus' breath amidst a community
that forgives sins and holds fast to those
whom it has brought into
the community of eternal life.

I need this community of St. Stephen.

I need the voice of peace that is
trustworthy and true. (Pause)

As Jesus came to stand among the disciples
frightened and locked away, he did not
depart from them.

The scene only shows a coming.

We know they left the room eventually
because Jesus has breathed
renewed mission into them:

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Amen!