

Acts 17:22-31

John 14:15-21

1 Peter 3:13-22

“Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of
praise be heard.” AMEN!

“She said you hurt her so,
she almost lost her mind,

but now she said she knows,
you’re not the hurting kind.

She said she loves you and
you know that can’t be bad.

Yes, she loves you and you know
you should be glad, ooh!” :-)

Finally, the Spirit has brought forth
a Beatles song to kick off
our Sunday message.

Today is all about love.

Not the noun version but the verb.

The action word of loving; showing; experiencing.

This familiar text whispers into our ears
this abiding promise from Jesus.

The truth that he told his disciples,
the promise of not leaving them orphaned.

Words that revealed how he
had walked with them, abided with them,
and though he was going away...

another would be sent to take his place.

Of course, we identify
that “other” as the Holy Spirit.

The mysterious entity of the Trinity
that is described as wind and fire.

Powerful entities that can be seen and unseen,
heard and felt... a bit
like the powerful entity of loving, right?

Felt and experienced, seen and unseen,
an action that shouts and whispers. (Pause)

It's this ability of whispering
that I want us to focus on today.

I read a story about the blues master Jimmy Reed
in a sermon by Tom Long that told
how Jimmy was “a sharecropper's son...

with a throbbing harmonica-and-guitar
driven black rhythm and blues [sound].”

The story was that “if one listened very carefully,
there could sometimes be heard in the recordings,
ever so faintly in the background,

a soft voice of a woman murmuring in advance
the next verse of the song.

The story that grew up around this was
that Jimmy, so absorbed in the bluesy beat
and pulsing guitar riffs of his music

[was so taken] that he simply could not
remember the words of his own songs.

He needed help with the lyrics, and
the woman’s voice whispering the lyrics was
none other than that of his wife,

coaching her husband through the
recording session by whispering
the upcoming stanzas into his ear
as he sang.”

The whispers of his lover offering
the lyrics to his songs might be
the connection we come to as
we encounter the Spirit

whispering the words of Jesus'
loving actions into our ears.

We feel the wind/breath.

We invite in the words.

Powerful entities that can be seen and unseen,
heard and felt. (Pause)

So, what is it that we find in this
part of Jesus' farewell speech is that

Jesus recalls for us that the Holy Spirit
is a reminding "agent" for humanity, too.

This Spirit Wind that jogs our memories and
touches our hearts to fill them with love and
send us out bearing that love to others
is still blowing.

We recall Jesus' command to love God *and*
one another... both/**and** **NOT** either/or.

"Love God and love one another."

These lyrics whispered into the ears today
come into contrast with the flashy

and supernatural characteristics of
the Holy Spirit at Pentecost where
there were speaking in tongues, and
flames above people's heads,
with dramatic healings and
dynamic preaching.

Truly these exist, but today, Jesus recalls to us
the gentle whispers of God to love in action. (Pause)

Whenever I feel crushed by the weight of the world,
or when I feel incapable of love for people
who are selfish or pushy or
talk more than listen,

I'm reminded to listen for
the whispers of the Spirit.

It's tough, I never do this perfectly,
but when we curb harsh reactions
to one up each other,
I am more likely to have
the forgetful faith remembered.

Two commandments...
Love God (She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah)
and love one another
(with a love like that, you know

you should be glad). (Pause)

“When Jimmy Carter was running for the President of the United States, one of the more vivid moments in the campaign passed by almost unnoticed.

One Sunday morning, candidate Carter had been worshipping at the Baptist church in Plains, Georgia.

When the service was over, he exited the church into the swarm of press encamped on the front lawn.”

Cameras, lights, and microphones were thrust into his face as questions flew at him all at once.

“Did you like the sermon?”

“Did you enjoy the choir this morning?”

“Do you plan to remain a Baptist if elected to president?”

The questions spewed out.

“Suddenly, a reporter,
probably out of sheer luck (or something else)

asked a question that genuinely mattered.

“Mr. Carter, suppose when you are President,
you get into a situation where the laws of
the United States are in conflict with what
you understand to be the will of God.

Which will you follow, the laws of the state or
the commandments of God?”

“Carter stopped, looked up, blinked into
the bright Georgia sun, obviously turning
the question over in his mind.

Then, perhaps still “in the Spirit...
on the Lord’s Day,” perhaps with
the Spirit gently whispering the lyrics of

the gospel into his ear, he turned toward
the reporter and replied,

“I would obey the commandments of God.”

In the revelatory moment, time almost stopped,
but then “alert aides,

unnerved by their candidate's
near treasonous remark, quickly
whisked him away from the press.

Carter the politician should have
avoided the question, or stood close
to the law of the land,

[made them his priority] but Carter the Christian
had the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ whispering
the gospel into his ear.

Do you love me?
The world cannot see or know me.
Do you love me and love others?"

These are my commandments. (Pause)

Look, it's no secret that we forget.

I lose my temper.

I want to blame others for not
loving God and one another and too often
the world chooses forgetfulness of
Jesus' commandments over and
over again.

But then there's the whisper of the gospel.

The pinch of bread and sip of wine.

The hymn that speaks a truth and a
musical key change that makes
the heart skip a beat.

They're all whispers of a power greater than I.

A divine Wind and Holy Fire that sits with you...
comes alongside for you...
advocates when needed.

That's the Spirit we need to know.

The One who comes alongside us and says,
"May I sit with you, my love is active."

AMEN!