

“May our meditation be pleasing to God;
we will sing praises while we have being.” AMEN!

(Sing!)

“How many roads must a man walk down,
before you can call him a man?

How many seas must a white dove sail,
before she sleeps in the sand?

Yes an, how many times must the cannonballs fly,
before they're forever banned?

The answer my friend is blowing in the wind
The answer is blowing in the wind.

Yes an, how many years can a mountain exist,
before it is washed to the sea?

Yes an, how many years can some people exist
before they're allowed to be free?

Yes an, how many times can a man turn his head and
pretend that he just doesn't see?

The answer my friend, is blowing in the wind
The answer is blowing in the wind.

Yes an, how many times must a man look up
before he can see the sky?

Yes an, how many ears must one man have
before he can hear people cry?

Yes an, how many deaths will it take till he knows
that too many people have died?

The answer my friend is blowing in the wind
The answer is blowing in the wind.”

That song, by the great Bob Dylan,
came not to me last week
but to your confirmation teacher, Dave.

And once he mentioned it, in connection to
the Spirit Wind of Pentecost, well let's just say,
I couldn't get it out of my head. :-)

I love the way Dylan continually
asks questions in his song.

Deep questions of justice, awareness, and
the life journeys we take,
without an attempt to answer them.

The answers are out there blowing in the wind,

he doesn't try to answer them on his own.

So on this particular Pentecost, all believers,
the new ones and the not as new ones;

the strong in faith,
and the faith challenged are mesmerized
by the displays of God's Spirit.

Amazing displays witnessed in the scripture lessons.

And I'd like us first to notice that
the Spirit comes to the world in noisy ways
and the Spirit comes to the world
in quiet ways, too. (Pause)

In Acts, there's the noisy celebration that
took place in Jerusalem around 50 days
after Jesus' resurrection.

Like it was at Passover, Jerusalem is full of people
who were there to celebrate.

This time though it is for the Festival of Weeks.

A festival that started as a celebration for
the first harvest, but then morphed
into a celebration of God giving
the people the 10 Commandments.

It was a big day that brought the spread out Jewish people back to Jerusalem.

As reported in Acts, suddenly a violent wind erupted.

Not only outside but it swept through the space where the 120 people gathered with thousands in the street.

It must have been both awe and terror inspiring.

The noise was deafening and then the theophany of flames hovering over people's heads and people speaking different languages but hearing and understanding what was being said.

Peter preached and tried to explain what was happening.

Put some sense to it all.

Some understood and some didn't.

A huge number of people were baptized and it was a marvelous thing. (Pause)

That's the familiar Pentecost account.

Today, we might call such an
event like this as Pentecostal.

Noisy, energetic, fiery and alive. (Pause)

But, there are other Pentecost accounts
that are more quiet like the one told
about in John when the followers of Jesus
were locked away in an upper room.

They were quiet, afraid, hidden,
and contemplative because Jesus had
been executed and they feared they'd be next.

No noise, no fire, no speaking in tongues...
but still a Pentecost experience occurred
when suddenly Jesus appeared and
breathed peace into them.

They don't jump up and down.
They don't do anything at all.

They weren't sure of what they were even seeing
and then Jesus showed them his hands and feet.

The scars from the nails and suddenly
they rejoiced and knew it was Jesus and

he was back.

You see, here they received the Holy Spirit, too.

Just like in Acts, it was a Pentecost experience.

Is one better than another?

One cannot be better than another
when God initiated both. (Pause)

So whether it is by wind or breath,
God's Spirit goes where it wills.

The Spirit will blow loudly at times and
breathe quietly in others.

Our prayer is: "Take not your Holy Spirit
from us, O Lord."

As we pray this, we are particularly mindful of
those who are affirming their baptism today.
Astrid, Colton, Graham, and Will have satisfied
the requirements and responsibilities for
completion of Confirmation 2024
at St. Stephen Lutheran Church.

"Lord, take not your Holy Spirit from them."

This day is special but it is not so much
a day of graduation, as it is a step
in the right direction.

It is a start of a new journey.

Today is an important rite of passage as
you each move into adulthood, but
never will we fully understand all of
the mysteries of our faith.

Yet, what I do know is this,
today might be the last day you'll
be in church for a while.

I hope it isn't.

You might even wish to deny it, but
my experiences have proved it to be true.

So, I will tell you what my pastor told me long ago.

The light will always be on at the church for you.

This church's door, and the doors of other church's,
will always be open for you because
God's Spirit remains with you
in this world whether we think
she is or not. (Pause)

No one can explain the Holy Spirit and
no one can describe the Holy Spirit.

The answer is blowing in the wind. (Pause)

There is a tree in our neighborhood that stood
straight and tall last week.

On the way out on Monday I saw that it was
bent over and the top of it was
almost touching the ground.

What caused that tree to bend like that?

The answer, of course, was the wind.

A man proudly boasted how he didn't need
anything or anyone.

He was just fine without a single soul in their life,
then one day... he turned around and
joined the church.

What happened?
What got into him?

The answer is the Spirit got into him.

She graduated and moved on.

Like the country song goes.

“How could 18 years just up and walk away?”

She began a career, was successful and
traveled the world.

Then, one day realized that the many things
she could buy and many places she could travel
could never fill an empty space within her.

What pushed her back to God?

It was the Wind.

“The answer my friend, is blowing in the wind.”

And if She's blowing in the wind then
we can feel the Spirit, on our face... at our backs...
then be moved by the Spirit and see
the way the Spirit is moving the world.

AMEN!