A.M.D.G. Pentecost Sunday - A Text: Acts 2: 1- 21

 June 9th, 2019

***Acts 2 ….*** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And 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. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’  But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘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, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is 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, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.  Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

**A Conspiracy of Hope**

Did you know that the word conspire literally means *‘to breathe together’*? You can hear the word *spirit* in there, too - to conspire - to be filled with the same spirit – to breathe together - to be enlivened by the same wind. The word really appeals to me!

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What happens between us when we come together to worship God is that the Holy Spirit swoops in and out among us - knitting us together through the songs we sing, the prayers we pray, the breaths we breathe. Worship, in this sense, becomes a conspiracy! And it can happen with two people or with two thousand.

If you have ever studied earth science, then you know that our gorgeous blue-green planet is wrapped in a protective veil we call the atmosphere - which separates the air we breathe from the cold vacuum of outer space. Beneath this veil is all the air that ever was.

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 No cosmic planet-cleaning company comes along every hundred years or so to suck out all the old air and pump in some new - which is why things like world Climate Agreements – like the Paris Accord - and other global environmental programs are becoming so crucial – and why its so disturbing and appalling when world leaders like Trump continue to deny that we are in the midst of a crisis to keep our planet alive for future generations.

Scientists tell us that the same ancient air just keeps recirculating - which means that every time any of us breathes, we breathe things like the star dust left over from the creation of the earth. We breathe brontosaurus and pterodactyl breath. We breathe air that has circulated through the rainforests of Guatemala and Kenya and the Amazon - as well as air that has turned yellow with sulphur over Mexico City or dense with smog over Beijing.

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We breathe the same air that Plato breathed, and Mozart and Michelangelo - not to mention Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mother Teresa – as well as our grandparents and our great-great-great-great grandparents!

Every time we breathe, we take in what was once some baby’s first breath, or some dying person’s last sigh. We take it in - we use it to live - and when we breathe out, it carries some of ***us*** into the next person, or tree, or animal - who, in turn, uses it to live. Isn’t that ***amazing?!***

So, when Jesus let go of his last breath - willingly, we believe, for the love of us - that breath hovered in the air in front of him for a moment - and then it was set loose upon the earth.

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It was such a pungent breath - so full of passion, so full of life - that it did not simply dissipate as so many breaths do - but grew in strength and in volume - until it was a mighty wind - which God sent spinning through an upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. God wanted to make sure that Jesus’ friends were the inheritors of Jesus’ breath - and it worked!

There they were - about 120 of them, Luke says - all moping around and wondering what they were going to do without Jesus - when they heard what sounded like a holy hurricane headed their way. And a mighty wind blew through the whole house - until they were all filled up with it - every one of them filled to the gills with God’s own breath. And when they were finally able to breathe out again - Luke tells us that the air came out of them in languages they did not even know they knew.

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Like a room full of bagpipes all going at once - they set up such a racket that they drew a crowd. And people from all over came leaning in the windows and pushing through the doors - surprised to hear someone speaking their language so far from home.

There is an older Garfield cartoon I love. It features Garfield the cat, and Odie, his sidekick roommate dog. Well, Odie is chasing Garfield up into a tree, as dogs like to do with cats. As Garfield races up, Odie follows him all the way. And there they are, the two of them - resting side by side on a tree limb - when owner Jon comes by. Looking up, he says, “Odie - dogs can’t climb trees!” Whereupon Garfield thinks, “Isn’t it amazing what you can accomplish when you don’t know what you can’t do.” And it ***is*** amazing what we can do when we don’t know what we can’t do – isn’t it?!

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That was certainly the case in point for those early followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost – the birthday of the church. For all of a sudden they were able to do things ***they***  didn’t know they could do. Like speak in different languages. Like tell people about the amazing things about Jesus. And, suddenly - before the day was over - Luke tells us that the church had grown from 120 to more than 3000! Shy people became bold, scared people became gutsy, and lost people found a sure sense of purpose and direction.

Disciples who had not believed themselves capable of tying their own sandals without Jesus, discovered abilities within themselves that they never knew they had. When they opened their mouths - they began to sound a lot like Jesus. When they laid their hands on the sick - it was as if Jesus himself had touched them.

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In short order, they were doing things they had never seen anyone but him do. And there was no explanation for it - except that they had joined a conspiracy by daring to inhale in the breath of Jesus on the day of Pentecost - and had been transformed by it.

The Holy Spirit had entered into them in much the same way it had entered into Mary, the mother of Jesus - and for the same reason. It was time for God to be born again - not in one body this time - but in a body of believers who would receive the breath of life from their Lord and pass it on – with some of their love attached.

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And that’s the very same legacy of Pentecost that we have all inherited to this very day. Whenever we find ourselves speaking with an eloquence we didn’t know we had; or offering forgiveness we had not meant to offer; whenever we find ourselves taking risks we never knew we had the courage to take - or reaching out to someone we intended to walk away from - we are part of the conspiracy of the Holy Spirit .... breathing in and breathing out - taking Jesus’s breath in and giving his love back to the world again - with some of ***us*** attached!

God knows - how it is truly amazing what we can do when we don’t know what we ***can’t*** do! All it takes is opening up the windows of our hearts and allowing the freshening wind of the Holy Spirit to blow through us once again.

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I sincerely pray for that amazing power of the Holy Spirit to fill each inch of my own life – and the life of this congregation – that we might be part of the body of Christ's conspirators around the world. May God give us this gift of Spirit and the courage to allow it to use us in powerful ways!