

The Breath of Life

Acts 2:1-11

When I first came to Asbury UMC, I said, “I wished it was the day of Pentecost so that I didn’t have to worry about my broken English.” Do you remember that? Though my English is still on its journey toward perfection, some things have changed throughout our journey together. First, my English has improved, but at the same time, your ears have tuned to my Korean-Rhode Islander accent and your ability to understand my English has significantly improved. Second, some of you can now speak a little bit of Korean. Last Tuesday, David called me and greeted me in Korean. Of course, I didn’t understand what he said [ppt] because his teacher of Korean is Alexa. He needs a better teacher, so I plan to become his Korean slang teacher as he is my English slang teacher. The Holy Spirit has not miraculously fixed my English but the Spirit has surely broken down the communication barriers between us and made us a loving family in Christ. This is what the Holy Spirit did in the Bible and is still doing in the world today.

Pentecost

Today is Pentecost Sunday and we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. It is the day of celebration for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. Both the Hebrew and Greek words for the Holy Spirit originally meant “breath or wind.” The book of Acts describes the Holy Spirit as “a strong wind, gale force.” This is the wind of creation and life that hovered over the watery abyss before the creation. This same wind of creation and life turned the chaos into the cosmos and creates new life. The same powerful wind turned dust into human beings. When God made a human from dust, God breathed the breath of life into the person who then became a living being. Dust is nothing but it became something... something very important... something very precious. It became the image of God when God breathed the breath of life into it.

The same wind of creation and life blew into the upper room and gave new life to those who gathered there. As dust was transformed into the image of God by receiving the breath of life, the disciples of Jesus became God’s new creation as they received the Holy Spirit. When the breath of life was poured into them, they became something very important, something very precious. They become the body of Christ given to the world. Pentecost Sunday is the birthday of the church. Just like a new born cries out when they first inhale air, the church, filled with the breath of life right after its birth, roared out the truth of God’s mighty works! People heard the lion’s roar that awakened their souls. As the strong wind of life blew, the hearts of the disciples were burning and people could see them burning! That’s why people came on the run! The Disciples didn’t try to bring people to them. They didn’t think strategy and plan how to get people into the church. What did they do? They were caught on the fire by the Holy Spirit and people came to see them burn. John Wesley knew this wisdom so he said, “Catch on fire and people will come for miles to see you burn.”

Wesley’s words have proven to be true. Jan Jones shared about the 2023 Asbury revival last week. On February 8, a small number of students spontaneously remained in an auditorium after the regular chapel service and prayed. While they were praying and praising God, one student confessed and repented his sin and this sparked the revival. Each day, approximately 15,000 people joined the worship and prayer meetings during the revival. By its conclusion, the event had drawn 50,000–70,000 visitors to Wilmore, Kentucky. Yes. Wesley was right. When these young students were caught on fire, thousands of people traveled for hundreds of miles to see them burn and also encountered the Holy Spirit and were caught on fire. Can the same thing happen to our Asbury? Why not! I pray that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit happens in our church as we have a special worship service next Sunday. I hope to see you raising your hands and clapping and praising spontaneously with overwhelming joy and gratitude! If you want to dance, you are more than welcome to! I hope to see you burn with the Holy Spirit!

Of course, we have to admit that we don’t have control over the Holy Spirit. Let me be honest with you. I don’t know what will happen next Sunday. I don’t know what Danny is going to speak about and I have no idea how our worship will unfold. We have no control over it. In fact, we don’t have control over anything. During last month’s yard sale, I had a conversation with Frank Rose, the wise! Despite a few dry hours at the beginning, the rain eventually poured down, and the number of visitors to our yard sale declined. Frank told me, “We don’t have control over the weather. In fact, we don’t have control over anything. The only thing we can

control is our reaction to what happens.' This rang true for me. We cannot control the Holy Spirit. However, there are things we can do. We can expect the presence of the Holy Spirit. We can attune our hearts to God and pray for our worship service to be another 2023 revival for our church and our community. Jesus promised that the heavenly Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! With trust in God, ask God the Holy Spirit and expect God to do a great thing through us!

'I' Am the One to catch on fire!

Remember that great revival movements always begin with one person or a small group of individuals who sincerely yearn for the Holy Spirit, who want to be caught on fire by the Holy Spirit! Don't expect our church to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that you can also experience it.

During my mission trip to Maine, one of tasks I was asked to do was burning old files. I was surprised that the United Methodist Economy Ministry team has really well kept church records. The oldest file was older than me. There were more than 30 boxes and I burned only five boxes. Do you think that paper is easy to burn? Not really. A sheet of paper burns quickly but a stack of paper does not burn easily. The outside of the paper stack will burn, but the core can't get any oxygen so it will not burn. If you don't believe me, try this at home! I think that the same is true for the church. People often look for a Spirit-filled church as if they will also experience the working of the Holy Spirit in that church. But when it comes to the matter of the Holy Spirit, don't expect that you will automatically experience the presence of the Holy Spirit if you stand with people filled with the Holy Spirit. You have to yearn for God. You must sincerely search for God. So pray for your heart to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Don't be satisfied with just standing with good people. Catch on fire and be the person who encounters God! Pray and wait with yearning for the Holy Spirit.

A Great revival always begins with one person. You can be the spark. You are the spark that ignites the great revival! Size and age don't matter. What matters is whether we are ignited by the fire of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit, the breath of life, filled the hearts of the disciples with overflowing energy, they could not simply hide themselves in a dark upper room. As they received the Holy Spirit, the fear of persecution and public humiliation became nothing to them. 120 disciples went out into the streets and declared the good news. People from whole nations listened to their witnessing in their own languages and about three thousand people became Christians on that day. That's how the church began.

The same thing is true in our Methodist tradition. Do you know how our Methodist tradition began? Methodism began with 'the Holy Club,' a group of individuals yearning and seeking God. When John Wesley and his friends were caught up with the fire of the Holy Spirit, this small renewal movement grew and became who we are now. A great revival always begins with one person. Make sure that it's you this time! During the week, pray for our special worship service and be prepared for the Holy Spirit! Expect a great thing from God and be ready to be a spark for another renewal of the church! The Holy Spirit will continue to guide us as the breath of life has been always with us. Amen.