

The Breath of God | *Keeping In Step with the Life-giving Spirit*

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5.25)

“The Day of Pentecost” (#5)

5.19.13

And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.⁵ Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven.⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language.⁷ And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"⁸ "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?"⁹ "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,¹¹ Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."¹² And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"¹³ But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."¹⁴ But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words.¹⁵ "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day;¹⁶ but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:¹⁷ 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams;¹⁸ Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy.¹⁹ 'And I will grant wonders in the sky above, And signs on the earth beneath, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.²⁰ 'The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.²¹ 'And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--²³ this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.²⁴ "And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.²⁵ "For David says of Him, 'I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.²⁶ 'Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; Moreover my flesh also will abide in hope;²⁷ Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.²⁸ 'Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou wilt make me full of gladness with Thy presence.'²⁹ "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.³⁰ "And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn

to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne,³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.³² "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses."³³ "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."³⁴ "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,³⁵ Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'" "³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified."³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."³⁹ "For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."⁴⁰ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.⁴² And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.⁴³ And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.⁴⁴ And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common;⁴⁵ and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.⁴⁶ And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,⁴⁷ praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Act 2:1 NAS)

Today celebrates the Day of Pentecost. It's not a day that is celebrated OUTSIDE the Church at ALL... i.e. it's not like Easter (with the stores selling candy and plastic eggs) OR like Christmas (with lights and sales and cards and gifts)... I seriously doubt anyone will find a Pentecost Sale ("one day ONLY!") or greeting cards. So...it's only US... people in the Church who care about this holiday (you won't get a day off work).

And the reason we do celebrate it and must...recognize it... is because the whole Christian understanding of human history and about what God has in mind for humanity ... *it all depends on this day*. It changed the course of Western Civilization ... made Christianity more than a Jewish sect... but instead a way of seeing the world that now claims over 2 billion adherents. It's the third great act of God after Creation and Incarnation... the POURING OUT of the very heart of God, the Spirit of God on all nationalities, Jews and Gentiles alike.

Today, I want to think of this moment as a kind of crisis moment for the whole world... this is the beginning of the end – the Last Days begin with this event (v.17) And I want to use this CRISIS moment to help us think about crisis moments in all of our lives. Again, this was a one-time, universal crisis, a turning point...and I don't want to detract from it but what happens when we fail to capitalize on the really big moments God brings into our lives AND what DOES it mean to

respond in a redemptive way when there's a huge *change* that comes our way. I've said it many times before, "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste"...So today, we think about how NOT to waste a crisis.

A simple outline: 1) Crisis 2) Conclusion and 3) Consequence.

In 1962 an American scientist named Thomas Kuhn published a book called *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In that book he coined a phrase that has entered our cultural vocabulary, "paradigm shift". This he said is how real scientific advances are made. For instance... we once thought the earth was flat and that the universe was 'Geo-centric' i.e. that the sun and the planets all revolved around the Earth... but then a paradigm shift, the Copernican Revolution took place... and that changed everything.

People *used* to think epidemics were caused by bad air, vapors from rotting stuff (miasma) would make people sick but then a paradigm shift...germs cause disease (micro-organisms). And once that crisis happens, when the paradigm shifts, you can't go back.

On the Day of Pentecost, a spiritual crisis took place; first, there was a miracle and then a BIG QUESTION and the explanation...THEN a CONCLUSION followed by another BIG QUESTION... and in the course of that a paradigm shift had taken place and the world has never been the same. The miracle came to this group of believers, some 120 of them, gathered together in a large, upstairs, rented room...waiting for what Jesus Christ had promised. The Day of First-fruits came, the day that celebrated the first harvest from the Promised Land (Deu. 26), fifty days after Passover (thus the name).

A sound of rushing wind...flames of fire hovering over the men and women who were waiting...and a miracle of speech, people were speaking in human languages they had never learned. Somehow (maybe by open windows) the miracle spills out into the crowded streets and draws a crowd. There were pilgrims there come to celebrate the Feast of First-fruits...devout Jewish people from all over the Empire. People are hearing these uneducated Galileans speaking in their own foreign languages and the foreigners are amazed...astonished... and confused.

Some mock – "Ah they must be drunk!" (but it's only 9am!) But others respond to the crisis with awareness and openness...and A BIG QUESTION: "What does this mean?"

Now, WHEN God brings something into your life, some significant "game-change" – could be MARRIAGE (that's a big change) or parenthood or retirement or unemployment or a DIAGNOSIS...or some unexplained deep emotional distress or a job TRANSFER (that will entail relocating ...maybe far away) or a breakup...or an empty nest or graduation – COULD BE A GOOD CHANGE OR A HARD ONE...but some significant crisis, a fork in the road that calls for a recalculation or a re-assessment of your life...*ONE WAY TO WASTE the moment...is to be dismissive*: "Ah! They're just drunk...some silly commotion ...interesting but I don't have time...gotta soldier on...move along...stuff happens...just roll with it."

But on the other hand...you COULD...be aware, observant, reflective...and you might just ask, "What does this mean?". There's a real divide here in this passage – some were dismissive; others were humble, open and seeking.

So Peter speaks to the inquiring crowd. He quotes the Prophet Joel...an ancient prophecy at least 500 years old and predicting this very moment, this new beginning for the world... a time of spiritual flood when the heart of God would be given – NOT just intermittently as in the OT – the Spirit will gush out prodigiously and lastingly. Old, young, women, men, great and small... "I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity...and everyone who calls on the name of Israel's God will be saved!"

And then Peter gives the credit for this fulfillment, this crisis moment for which the world has waiting, Peter says, "What pierced the dam...what punctured the restraining wall...so that God's presence is not trickling out but Poured out...was the life of a perfect Man. . . Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God has come and God, the Father, endorsed Him by miracles and signs" ...AND THEN...mysteriously...two things that are at odds – divine decree and human sin...they somehow worked together and "the Messiah was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God and you nailed Him to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death..."

"But Peter, that's impossible that the Messiah should fail...that God would plan His death...that even our sin should defeat Him..."

And Peter answers with the Psalms... "Don't you see? David wrote about Him...our Bible (the OT) is all about Him... When David wrote this 16th Psalm, he couldn't have been writing of himself, 'You will not abandon my soul to hades, nor allow Your holy One to undergo decay. You have made known to Me the ways of life; You will make Me full of gladness with Your presence.'"

See...human sin did not thwart the eternal plan of God... You were right...the Resurrection of the Dead won't happen 'til the end of time...but God has given us the first-fruits of the resurrection, a new and better Adam, a perfectly obedient Man and death could not hold Him – HE IS RISEN! That's how there could be a dying Messiah and yet also victorious! God has done it!

And standing, in His spotless obedience, the perfect Man has gained for us...*a reward... "having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."* He is full of gladness this day to give us the guarantee, the first fruits, the Holy Spirit gushing out of Jerusalem today" ...and then Peter's bold conclusion:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified."

They may not have been holding the hammer that drove the nails... may not have been in the crowd yelling, "Crucify! Crucify!"... But the Holy Spirit is convicting them just as Jesus Christ had

promised (John 16.8) and they see that *THEY* are real sinners and that only by a Perfect Man taking their blame could they be made right with God... *"Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"* – That's the second big question.

It's not the kind of question people ask out of curiosity or something theoretical or mere interest – IT'S A BROKENHEARTED QUESTION. It's a desperate question...it comes from the influence of the Holy Spirit... it comes from a paradigm shift and now there's no going back. It's the only question that makes sense.

And Peter responds, "Repent and each of you be baptized into this new and living Way... into the name of your New Representative – come out of the disobedient Adam who spoiled creation and into the Name of the New Adam, Jesus Christ, Lord of the New Creation.

And those who come under this Name receive forgiveness and new life, the Gift of the Holy Spirit... life for you, your children and all who are swept up in the surging waters of the Spirit that are flooding the world with grace (Ezek. 47).

And they did: the little group of twelve... became 120...and then 3000 were added on that one day...

In the days that follow this Crisis...leading to a Conclusion there was finally a CONSEQUENCE...a result. What Elton Trueblood called, "The Incendiary Fellowship" – the church on fire with the Spirit and the flame is spreading quickly.

Their way of looking at the world could never be the same... they could never again think that vapors caused epidemics or that the earth was the center of the Solar System...the paradigm had shifted and could never go back... So what did it look like for them and what will it look like for US...In other words, what is repeatable and normative in this episode and what was unique and something we shouldn't expect?

Well, just as the Crucifixion and Resurrection were one-time events, so also Pentecost was a one-time event. The Spirit had moved inward through the whole OT – IN to the people of Abraham...IN to their land...IN to Jerusalem and IN to the Temple and now His direction is reversed – out from the Temple, to Jerusalem, out to Judea, Samaria and out to the ends of the Earth (1.8). There were signs and wonders peculiar to that moment... do they continue today? Christians differ on that answer... but we all have to agree on this: Pentecost changed the world...and the Church forever.

The Spirit is given to the Church...He indwells the Church...We are not left as orphans...the Comforter, the Advocate, the Presence, the Heart of God is poured out...somehow different than the way He was given in the OT. And what is He doing...in the Church and in the world? What is His nature, His role, His desire?

Well, think of some of His first appearances in the OT. In Genesis, He hovers over the chaos and brings order and peace. He is like a mighty rushing wind into that lump of clay called “Adam” and “Adam became a living soul”. He is “the Lord and Giver of life” (Nicene Creed)...He is raising people all over the world, imparting life, that’s what He does.

At Babel, the LORD finds humanity united in opposition to Him – it’s like fish protesting against water and, in order to save them from self-destructing, He confuses their languages...The same word (LXX) is used in this passage, v. 6, “they were confused (bewildered)...” and the Spirit reverses Babel. Like bookends in the Bible. The New Creation Church...the Church come of age is, from her debut, a multi-lingual, multi-cultural church – the Holy Spirit is the Communicator in the Trinity...inspiring the Scripture (2 Peter 1.21) and now giving utterance so the whole world will hear the mighty deeds of God in their own languages. He is Life-Giver and Communicator.

And yet...as we face our own crises...and undergo certain paradigm shifts in this life...even as we seek a redemptive outcome from the big game-change moments of life and even as we ask those BIG questions, “What does this mean? What is God teaching me here – how is the world and God OTHER than the way I thought?” And as we draw conclusions from what God has said in His Word...as the Spirit and the Word work together to convict us and bring us again to that place of repentance and faith... “What shall we do? Lord, I’m in Your hands...nothing makes sense here but to trust You – lead me on and I will follow!” As we respond... we will be like the early church... filled with awe and and filled with FLAW.

If you read Acts you’ll see how stubborn and ingrained their prejudices were... The paradigm did indeed... really shift...and yet... they would often live as if the earth were flat...in other words they go back into the absurd. Through Acts, God the Spirit has to hammer life and grace into them because they seem to forget the paradigm shift...and it’s absurd. That’s what sin IS...once you see the New Creation... and see sin as a part of the Old Creation...where there’s death and despair...and all the marks of our fallen-ness...SIN belongs to that fading world. It’s the OLD ME...not the person I am destined to be.

And yet... it’s not simply a new way of thinking we need...it’s much more than sort of psyching ourselves into to being good...and changing... we need divine HELP.

We need the presence and power of God the Holy Spirit to continuously SHOW UP and actually do what He does...impart life and love (the fruit or evidence of His presence)... We must see that He is given to us because Jesus Christ GOT Him for us... We do not deserve the Spirit...Jesus does...

And repenting and believing...coming again and again to Jesus Christ... the Spirit is given to the broken and believing... Even now you can come that way and be changed. (LET’S PRAY)