

A Sermon by  
Rev. Jim Hickman  
Corona United Methodist Church  
May 23, 2010  
Pentecost Sunday

Cast Your Fate to the Wind  
John 3:5-8, especially verse 8

As I began thinking about what I wanted to say for Pentecost I considered the two major themes for the day: the coming of the Holy Spirit that day and the birth of the Church—Pentecost is the day a loose group of followers of Jesus Christ were forged into movement that is the Church. Generally I prefer the theme of the coming of the Holy Spirit because I think it is the Spirit that makes us alive in Christ and holds us together as the Church.

So my thinking was running along these lines when the refrain from a tune I love popped into my head

...and you just cast your fate to the wind.

That is a very good description of how I think we should respond to the Holy Spirit!

Just cast your fate to the wind...

It is captured in a talk Jesus had with Nicodemus about the need to be 'born again.' In the midst of this talk Jesus says,

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you can not tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.  
(John 3:8)

There are two play-on-words in the passages, words in Greek that can mean two different things. The first is *pneuma* translated as wind in the quote I just read. But can also be translated spirit. Thus the first line can be read,

The spirit blows where it pleases.

The second is the word *sound*. It can also be translated as voice. When you do that verse 8 can be translated:

The Spirit blows or moves where it pleases. You can hear Its voice, but you can not tell where It is coming from or going to. That is the way it is with everyone who is *born* (hmmm, I think there is a third double meaning word there)—that is the way it is with everyone who is carried by the Spirit.

The Spirit—the Holy Spirit—is like the wind. It is, for me, the same spirit that animated the dead bones in Ezekiel's description of the Valley of the Dry Bones:

This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath (wind or spirit) enter you and you will come to life...I will put breath in you and you will come to life... (Ezekiel 37:5-6)

Likewise, it is the Spirit our Psalm for the morning referred to:

When you send your Spirit

They (all the creatures of the earth) are created

And you renew the face of the earth. (Psalm 104:30)

It is the wind of Jesus' statement. It is the Holy Spirit.

And the appropriate response to the call of the Spirit, the invitation of Jesus to “come and follow me” is to “Cast your fate to the wind...” It is as simple as that.

Ah, but what does that mean? Well, I suspect for many of us it means “stop planning ever minute of our lives/stop trying to control everything.”

For some others it may mean “open each day with a prayer of openness to the leading of the Spirit.”

For still others it will mean developing “an ear” for the winds movement/for the Spirit’s movement.

Some of us plan everything. I plan ahead. I have a pretty good idea of what I will be preaching on through the end of June. Oh, don’t let that statement deceive you—I am at the end of a preaching period. In July I will go away for a couple of days and I hope plan with the Spirit sermon topics all the way through Thanksgiving. By doing this kind of planning I don’t come to Wednesday and wonder, “What am I preaching on this Sunday?” Ah, but in any given week I have to be open to the Spirit’s lead

This idea isn’t working.

Is there something else I need to be looking at? (that is a prayer)

Didn’t I just say I began thinking about this Sunday’s sermon wondering “What am I going to do this Sunday?”

That is an openness to the Spirit. And that openness is part of a Christian’s daily life—his or her personal life, family life, work life, friendships and service.

For some of us casting our fate to the wind means “opening each day with a prayer of openness to the leading of the Spirit.” Now I must admit when I think of “Cast your fate to the wind...” I am thinking of the wildly exciting image of running ahead of a strong wind!! But when I really think of how I know the Spirit’s moves in my life, more often than not it is a gentle breeze. Sometimes it is just a quiet presence or a soft rustling of the leaves. Isn’t that what one of the verses of the song says,

You shift your course along the breeze

Won’t sail upwind on memories

The empty sky is your best friend

And you just cast your fate to the wind. (verse 2)

It can be an openness to what the Spirit would like you to see. We went to a play the other night. I was tired and I hadn’t been feeling very good. The play was about several pieces of art and appeared to be head for a discussion of censorship and freedom expression. The same-ol’ same-ol’. But then play-write took an unexpected turn and she presented a really intriguing idea. I’m glad I went. Was it a prompting of the Spirit? I don’t know. Time will tell that. But it was an openness to the kind of thing the Spirit does lead us to. Keep open to the leading/the movement of the Spirit.

Some of us need to develop “an ear/an eye” for the movement of the Spirit. We do that by developing our prayer life; by reading scripture and other spiritually oriented materials. Among all the symbols for Pentecost (e.g. the wind or red or the descending dove or fire) the one I think we ought to use is the wind chime. Christians need to develop an internal wind chime to detect when the Spirit is moving.

You know, it seems to me I have been talking about this as if it is very serious stuff. But “casting your fate to the wind” can be fun. It leads to really interesting experiences and takes you places you never imaged you would go. It has meant Donna and I have

Operated a Coffee House drop in center for youth years ago  
I have lead a contemporary worship service with the 30 or so folks sitting in a circle and all the music was led by a folk guitarist (and this was before the Jesus movement made it popular).

We have traveled to places I/we never thought we would go...

Oh, "Casting your fate to the Wind..." can lead to some really delightful stuff!!

I began this morning by saying I was wondering what I would like to say this Pentecost Sunday. That was the question. But I already knew I wanted to share the Jazz worship music by Vince Guiraldi with you and was planning on using it this Sunday. Why? Pentecost for me is a time of change, of the invigorating movement of the Sprit, of the Wind inviting us to an enriched life in our spiritual life in the Church. "Holy Communion Blues" (which you heard when you came in this morning) and "Theme to Grace" are just that: fine pieces of mellow jazz that delight the ear and a surprise to the spirit when the second one gives ways to "Alleluia, Alleluia."

What I didn't realize when "Cast Your Fate to the Wind..." popped into my head it was it too is by Vince Guiraldi!! The movement of the Spirit? I think so. Its just the kind of thing that happens when you Cast Your Fate to the Wind.

Lets take a moment or two and prayerfully consider what we have heard and seen this morning. AMEN.