



\*"Wind, Fire, Spirit, Breath"  
"FIRE"

**Biblical Text: Acts 2:1-13**

Dr. Michael F. Gardner, Senior Pastor  
Old Mission United Methodist Church

(\* denotes frame change on screens)

---

\*As we gather together for worship today, we celebrate \*Pentecost Sunday, the birth of the Church as described in the \*Book of Acts, Chapters one and two.

\*But other events are looming larger this weekend for the families of Old Mission. The **big** events are High School graduations\* Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights in Shawnee Mission Schools, today and tomorrow for Blue Valley, and tonight in Olathe. And then there were the large number of students from Old Mission who \*graduated yesterday 120 miles west of here at Kansas State, \* and some who are walking the historic walk\* today to Campanile Hill and Memorial Stadium at KU. And I know there were graduates in other places I've missed.\*

I doubt that any of our students saw, or will see fire-y visions\* while sitting in their graduation garb, but I am willing to bet they each felt a little scared, excited, amazed, energized for the journey ahead. And surely that is a part of what the early Christians felt on the day of Pentecost.

\*As they gathered and prayed, my guess is they were wondering, *"What will our movement become in the days to come? How will we tell the world our story? Where will we find the courage and the energy to share the Good News?"*

Those questions are the important questions that face every Christian. They are more important than the endless debates\* of the Worldwide United Methodist General Conference taking place in \*Portland last week and next. They are more important than most of the other things we spend our days worrying about.\*

So as Graduation and Pentecost and daily life converges on this fifteenth day of May, what might the Holy Spirit teach us today? Let's start where Acts 2 begins.

\*\**"When the day of **Pentecost** came, they were all together in one place. \*Suddenly a sound like a mighty **wind** came down **from heaven** and filled the whole house where they were. \*They saw what seemed to be tongues as of **fire** that separated and came to rest on every one of them. \*And all of them were filled with the **Holy Spirit...**"*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:1-4, adapted by the author from several English translations.

\*The words **Wind, Fire, Spirit**, and later **Breath** are all prominent in the Pentecost story, and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. So, a few months ago, when one of our members, Cliff Van Blarcom, said *"Have you ever considered preaching a series on the Holy Spirit?"* the idea for this series was born.

Every time we recite the Apostle's Creed, we say, *"I believe in the Holy Spirit."* But we don't talk about it much. We ought to. \*The Holy Spirit on Pentecost changed the nature of Church for ever. But it didn't start out that way!

Some years ago Dr. Tom Long was trying to explain Pentecost to a group of children. He dramatically told them that Pentecost was when the disciples of Jesus were all together at Church and the Holy Spirit came with wind and fire, and people believed, and the church was filled with power and joy! One of the girls' eyes grew wide and she said, *"I don't think we were here that Sunday!"*

**And the truth is a lot of us weren't here for that kind of that Sunday in the Church of Jesus Christ!** We are interested in dramatic stories like the one in Acts, Chapter two - but only academically. Fire attracts us, but only when it is tightly controlled, like \*fireworks on the Fourth of July or when farmers burn off a field. \*

But we also are scared of wind and fire, when it gets out of control\* like in Medicine Lodge or California or Canada.\* We've seen the damage that fire can do.

\*In case of a real fire, we've been trained to leave. Find the nearest exit. We even do a fire drill one Sunday a year. But Pentecost says something quite different to us. **In case of fire, it invites us to stay. Something amazing is waiting for us!**

Before Pentecost, the Church of Jesus Christ had very little going for it - none of the usual ingredients. No big building rising up like *"Six Flags over Jesus,"* no famous preacher, no choir or worship band, no slick marketing campaign. I mean the church had absolutely nothing going for it except ... except, as Bishop Willimon once said, *"Except that, when it gathered, the power of the presence of the living God, promised by Jesus, blew open the door and into their lives like a mighty wind, and came among them with fire, and infused them with a power not of their own making!"*

Pentecost is about what Jesus promised in Acts 1:8, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses."*<sup>2</sup>

This was not an exclusive thing, reserved for the individual disciples, or only the preachers. No, the spirit was given to all the early believers! **And I mean all.**

---

<sup>2</sup> Acts 1:8, *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, Copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

Look at the text again, Acts 2, verse 1: *\*“When the day of Pentecost came, they were **all** together in one place.”* You might wonder who are the “all.” \*Well, if you look back to Acts 1, you’ll discover that the antecedent for the “all” that were gathered in the upper room, was not just the disciples, but also the women, and the family of Jesus, and 120 other followers, who were **all**, all there for Pentecost.

So all meant **all**. Look at the text again. Verse 1: *\*“When the day of Pentecost came, they were **all** together in one place.”* Verse 3: *\*“And, tongues of fire ... separated and came to rest on **every one** of them.”* And Verse 4: *\*“And **all of them** were filled with the Holy Spirit...”* So, what part of “all means all” isn’t clear?

**And all still means all today.** When I read about the early church in the Bible, I see the presence of God's spirit in everyday believers like you, so powerful that it changed their lives, and spread joy like contagious fire!

There aren’t many passages in the New Testament about building big buildings, or becoming a mega-Church, or raising the budget, or how to get on the committee that picks the color of the carpet. I’m those things are somehow important in the great scheme of things, but ultimately they are secondary to why we are here.

Jesus said *\*“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.”* That’s why we are here.

And sometimes the power of God’s Holy Spirit still slips through closed doors, or closed minds, or our ordered worship, and our hearts are touched, and our commitment to Jesus and our faith is renewed. That’s what Pentecost was about.

Fred Craddock says, *\*\*“Without Pentecost, we are just left with fond memories of how it once was when Jesus was here.”*<sup>3</sup> But with the power of the Holy Spirit, we know we aren’t alone, we can get through whatever comes our way, and we find the best that is in us for a world in desperate need of joy and hope!

That’s the promise of Pentecost! Bruce Barton writes: *\*\*“Amazing things happen when we believe that inside of us is a power bigger than any challenges we face.”*<sup>4</sup>

You don't need the Holy Spirit if you want to be a social club. **\*\*** But if you want to be the Church of Jesus Christ, nothing but the fire of the Holy Spirit will do.

**So, join with me as we pray for the fire of God’s Spirit...**  
**...as we pray for \*Pentecost!** (Lead congregation in prayer.)

---

<sup>3</sup> Fred Craddock, *Preaching Through the Christian Year: Year A*. Copyright © 1992, Trinity Press. pp. 298-299.

<sup>4</sup> *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus* by Bruce Barton. Copyright © 1924, 2000, Ivan R. Dee, Publisher.