

Message: “Meeting the Holy Spirit Face to Face Part Two”, Week Two of “Meeting the Holy Spirit Face to Face”, presented by Reverend Kristen Lowe on 07-30-2017 at Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI.

In the book of John chapter 3, Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, a member of the great Sanhedrim, a senator, a privy-counselor, a man of authority in Jerusalem; on what it means to be born again. He tells Nicodemus and us about being born of the Spirit.

John 3:8

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So it is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Before Jesus rose into heaven right before the disciples’ eyes, he told them that because he would no longer be with them physically, he would send the Advocate. He told them to wait in the city until that Advocate came. And, they would know it when it happened.

Acts 2: 1-5

When the Feast of Pentecost came, Jesus’ followers were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a mighty wind, a gale force—no one could tell where it came from and it filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through and around them and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

On that day, the church was born. Each disciple was able to speak to those from around the world in every language who were in Jerusalem that day. It was a miracle! The disciples told them about God’s mighty works and the good news of Jesus Christ. That very day three thousand men – not including women and children became believers.

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Mario and Hank both love windy days, and no matter how windy it is, they find the nearest window, face the direction that the wind is coming from, put their noses up in the air ... and take it all in.

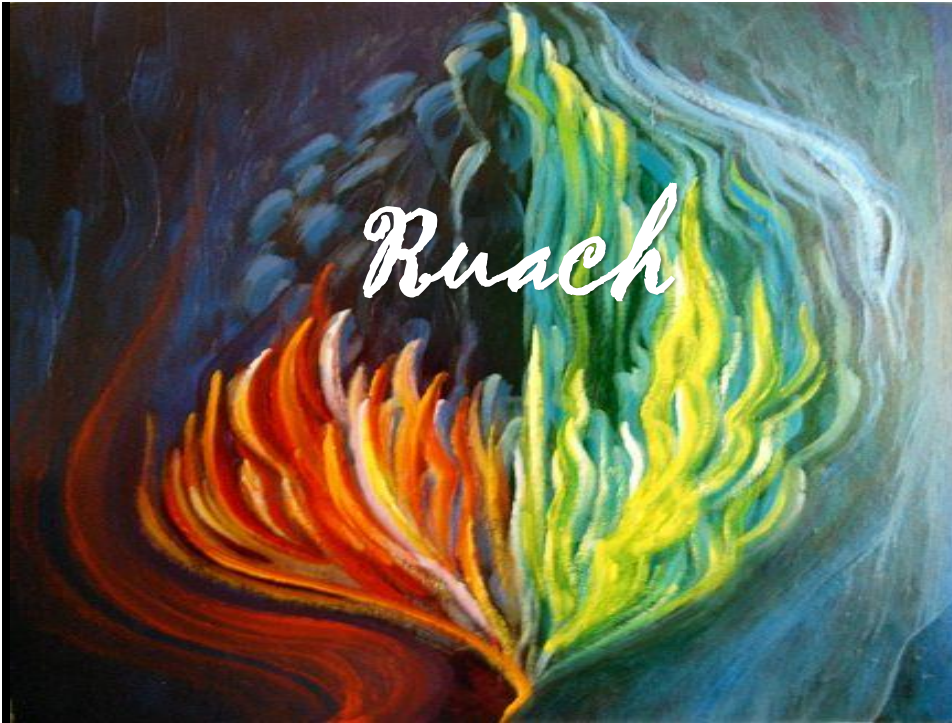
They're obviously oblivious to anything else going on. The wind brings them lots of things. For the most part my cats are confined inside so the wind is, for them, a sumptuous blessing.

The wind brings them experiences of a world beyond their powers to visit, including the smells of a dozen kinds of trees and hundreds of wildflowers, of squirrels and rabbits... the wind carries information and stories. It propels all of these things and more to my sweet kitties.

Lots of people can tell you that there is this concept of the Trinity...a 3-in-1 God that we identify as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...or in the older language, Holy Ghost.

But what is the Holy Spirit really, and what does it mean to say we believe in it? The notion of the Holy Spirit should be no surprise to you. After all, we are also spirit. We should be able to identify. We are spiritual beings in a tangible body. We inhabit this flesh. Go ahead; poke the person next to you. See? We're here in this body for a little while, but we are so much more than that.

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The word in Greek, which is the original language of the New Testament, is *pneuma*. It is the root of our English word *pneumonia* and other words that have to do with the lungs and breathing, and in the Bible it has a long, rich history.

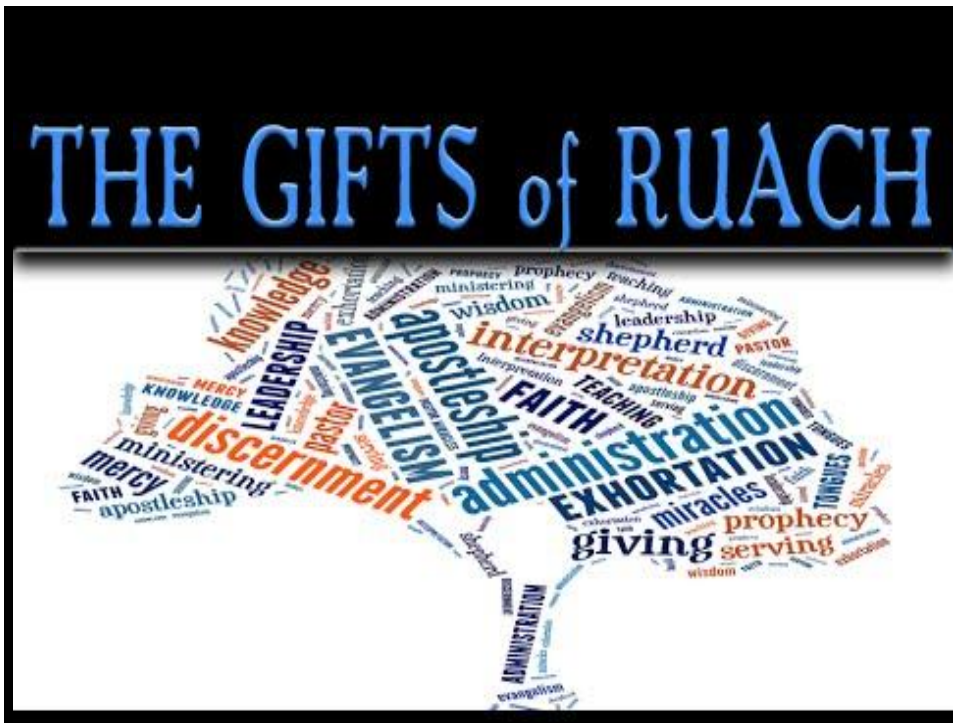
Back in the Hebrew Scriptures, the word was *ruach*, and both words meant breath, wind, and spirit...all at once. Our current words are so sterile and limiting. Breath, to us, is biology. Wind is meteorology. Spirit is theology.

It wasn't like that for those who wrote the Bible. For them, the wind that blew by, some of which you breathed in, was all the Spirit of God. God was blowing in the storm; God was giving you every breath; you lived by the Spirit of God. Like the wind, the Holy Spirit touches everything and he is everywhere.

You heard that *Ruach* is the breath of God that breathed into Adam in the beginning. It is the breath of God that gives the first man life. In Ezekiel, in that wonderful story about Ezekiel seeing a vision of a valley filled with the dry bones of dead soldiers, it is the wind of God, the *ruach*, that blows over the dry bones and brings them back to life. At Pentecost, as the disciples wait for the gift Jesus promised to them, there is a mighty wind that blows...and sure enough...it is the *pneuma*...the breath, the wind, the Spirit...that fills them and transforms their lives.

Jesus affirms our belief that God is a God who will act in history. With the Holy Spirit, we also affirm the ways that God is at work everywhere with everyone at all times. God in the Holy Spirit gives life to every human being, and according to the Psalms, every living thing on the planet.

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In both the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Spirit enables people to prophesy and to perform miracles, such as the way those in the passage from Acts are able to speak in languages that they have not learned. And we believe that today, the Holy Spirit gives us gifts. When we acknowledge those gifts and bathe ourselves in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do things that are far beyond our human ability.

So it's one thing to believe that the Holy Spirit exists, but it's another to believe in the Holy Spirit. Let me give you an example: I can tell my daughter that I believe in her – like I acknowledge that she exists. But it's another thing to say, “Hannah, I believe in you.” To say this means that I truly believe that she has the power and capability to do something great.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? That is, do you believe in the power of the Holy Spirit? And do you believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in you?

When I was about 11 years old I discovered that God had a particular gift and a particular calling for my life. But, I needed to allow the Holy Spirit to propel me. I didn't do that right away. I believed things about myself that stifled the work of the Holy Spirit.

Each of us has gifts and can invite the Holy Spirit to work within us... and propel our lives.

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As we sit here this morning, the Holy Spirit is here. It is within you, attaching to blood cells and coursing through your body. It is outside of you, inhabiting the air around and between you and the person next to you. He is working in special ways here, too.

He is working through the gift of music – preaching – building set up and decorated – lead growth groups – work in the office – pray – jump in and help others – Sunday morning volunteers.

A large measure of the joy in Christian life comes from believing that the Holy Spirit has provided you with your own set of special gifts and learning to discover and use them for God’s work. It is also a huge relief to know that we have different gifts, and not everybody has to have them all. It is all of us together that make up the Body of Christ, and it is the Holy Spirit that gives that Body life.

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The manifestation of the Holy Spirit on earth is wind and breath. It is sometimes labored, sometimes gentle, and sometimes it will blow your socks off. But it is meaningless to talk of life without it, and life is meaningless if we never make an effort to discover to what purpose our breath has been given.

We are pinwheels. When we allow the Holy Spirit to move in us, we become what we were made for.

Invite people to breathe or blow on their pinwheels.

If you know the gifts you have been given, give thanks and ask The Holy Spirit continue to open your heart.

If you don't know your gifts, come next week as we'll have a way for you to not only discover what your gifts are, but also how to see actual, tangible evidence of the Holy Spirit.

Pray:

Holy Spirit, as I let breath into my body, let me open myself to you. I can't survive without breath. And I can't survive without you. Help me to know and feel your presence. I give myself to you. Amen.