

Worship Resources - *Blown Away* / https://youtu.be/qM7DG30Ho_w

Pentecost 1, Year B,

31st May, 2021

Romans 8:12-17 CEV / John 3:1-17 CEV

Prelude *Obey My Voice*

played by church musician Annie Center,

<https://youtu.be/Br5E14bVVg0>

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Let us worship the Triune God.

Let us worship the One who spoke in the beginning and created something out of nothing.

Let us worship the One who took on the clothing of humanity to set those who were oppressed free.

Let us worship the One whose Spirit rests continually upon us, calling us from sorrow-filled endings to bright new beginnings.

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

As we gather today, let's recognize the movement of the Spirit in our lives together and as individuals, as we share together the familiar hymn, *Move in Our Midst*.

Reflection Video *Move In Our Midst* (with Lyrics)

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<https://youtu.be/qWpuBpxNXPU>

Invocation

O God of Mystery, Within your very self you model the beloved community. You are the Wisdom within our hearts, The Word who dwells among us, The Spirit who calls us beyond ourselves. Let us know your presence here today In a new way, that we might celebrate your love and go forth rejoicing with the Prophet Isaiah, saying: "Here am I. Send me."

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.

In our epistle reading today, we hear of the promise and strength provided through the Spirit of God in our lives. As we listen to these words from Romans, let's reflect on how the Spirit calls to us, and how we heed that call.

Epistle Reading Romans 8:12-17 CEV

My dear friends, we must not live to satisfy our desires.

If you do, you will die. But you will live, if by the help of God's Spirit you say "No" to your desires.

Only those people who are led by God's Spirit are his children.

God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father.^[a]

God's Spirit makes us sure that we are his children.

His Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ, because we have suffered with him.

Scripture Video Romans 8:12-17 *Living By The Spirit*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/69OPQDRfEwE>

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

This morning we lift up the DeBon family with the passing of Betty this week. May God give George, Lynn, Paul, and their family comfort, peace and strength during this difficult time.

We also lift up Matthew Schultz and his girlfriend Madison as they struggle with finding work and making ends meet after losing their jobs while they had Covid. May God provide for their needs.

We express gratitude in the recent leasing of our worship space to two additional churches and are joyful that our facility can provide a sacred space for others in the body of Christ.

We also continue to keep JoAnn and Bill Shoemaker in our prayers as JoAnn slowly recovers and Bill adjusts to his new living situation.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God: from the beginning of time to the end of eternity, you have chosen to use your power and majesty to love us, to redeem us, to shape us as your people.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords: you became weak so you could confront the strength of sin and death, confounding their ridicule with your resurrection.

Spirit of God, resting upon us: may your power inflame us with your peace; may your peace touch us with your grace; may your grace fill us with your hope; may your hope lead us into your Kingdom.

God in Community, Holy in One, may your word be on our lips, as we pray together as Jesus has taught us, saying,

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kin-dom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen.

In our gospel lesson this morning, we hear the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisee Nicodemus about being born again in the Spirit. As we listen to these words from John, let's reflect on our own spiritual journeys, and the difference the Spirit has made, or could make, in our own lives.

Gospel Lesson

John 3:1-17 CEV

There was a man named Nicodemus who was a Pharisee and a Jewish leader.

One night he went to Jesus and said, "Sir, we know that God has sent you to teach us. You could not work these miracles, unless God were with you."

Jesus replied, "I tell you for certain that you must be born from above^[a] before you can see God's kingdom!"

Nicodemus asked, "How can a grown man ever be born a second time?"

Jesus answered: I tell you for certain that before you can get into God's kingdom, you must be born not only by water, but by the Spirit.

Humans give life to their children. Yet only God's Spirit can change you into a child of God.

Don't be surprised when I say that you must be born from above.

Only God's Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going.

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

Jesus replied: How can you be a teacher of Israel and not know these things?

I tell you for certain that we know what we are talking about because we have seen it ourselves. But none of you will accept what we say.

If you don't believe when I talk to you about things on earth, how can you possibly believe if I talk to you about things in heaven?

No one has gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from there.

And the Son of Man must be lifted up, just as that metal snake was lifted up by Moses in the desert.[b]

Then everyone who has faith in the Son of Man will have eternal life.

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.

God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them!

Scripture Video John 3:1-17 *Entering The Reign Of God*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/6ckjqlnF7Ko>

Message *Blown Away*

When you're outside on a windy day, have you ever thought about the travels of the wind you feel blowing against your face. Where it came from, or where it's going? Can we ever definitively say we know exactly where that wind came from, or where it will end up? Of all the weather phenomena we experience, individual gusts of wind are probably the most unpredictable. We can certainly predict the general direction of the wind at different altitudes, based on weather fronts, temperature, etc. But that puff that stimulates the nerve endings on your skin, can be a gust from any direction, can't it? We can guess which way it will probably be blowing, but it can still surprise us, can't it, especially when we are participating in wind-affected activities like washing the car. Despite my best efforts at the car wash, the wind always seems to make sure some of the spray comes right back at me.

Sometimes when the wind is particularly strong, it can influence how we move from place to place.

I've had the opportunity to go sailing on a number of occasions and the wind plays a huge factor in that activity. You aren't going anywhere without it, and you are limited in how fast or far you are going in any particular direction based on how hard and in which direction the wind is blowing. If you've ever been in extreme weather-wind such as a hurricane, you realize that the wind can indeed literally stop you dead in your tracks. The wind drives the weather in our world and influences ocean currents. Wind spreads pollen and seeds, and can knock out power and trees. It's a safe bet to say the wind has a significant influence on our lives.

So much so, that Jesus uses the wind as a metaphor for the Spirit in today's gospel reading from John. He stresses how the wind blows where it chooses, and you know it's there, but you do not know where it's going. In our own journeys of faith, is that how the Spirit plays out for us? Jesus tells us that those who are born of the Spirit are like the wind. I think we all have the understanding that once we make the decision to follow Jesus, to join the faith, that the Spirit is to have a role in our lives.

Last Sunday was Pentecost Sunday, which remembers the Spirit coming into the lives of the first apostles as a tongue of flame, arriving in a rush of wind. This week let's consider what role that Spirit plays for us.

In our gospel lesson today, we have Nicodemus, a prominent Pharisee, seeking to understand the message Jesus was proclaiming. As a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus would be well-versed in Hebrew scriptures and the dogma and rules of the Judaic religious thought of the day. He would have spent years studying the Torah and other sacred texts, and would have engaged in robust debate about their meaning and application with the other scholars of his day. Yet he couldn't grasp this wild card, this gift from above, that Jesus said was crucial to our life's journey with the Almighty, the Spirit that is sent to guide us. He looked at Christ's teachings with a very literal lens, coming from a legalistic tradition and couldn't understand the metaphysical flavor of that message. To be born again makes no sense from that perspective, as one cannot be physically reborn from the same womb again. But he was missing the point, wasn't he? He was stuck in fleshly thinking, in seeing only the physical world and its rules and reality.

Paul tells us in our reading from Romans that we are to be led by the Spirit of God, as children of God, children who have put to death the previous life in the flesh, or a

worldly-focused life. But is that so easy to do? While we can criticize Nicodemus for his lack of understanding and perspective, we also need to take a look at our own lives.

We talk a lot about our struggles to discern the leadings and guidance of the Spirit in our own lives, but do we let that “wind” blow us in a different direction than we are headed? Like Nicodemus, it can be difficult for us to understand what it means to truly be born again of the Spirit and shed the fleshly life based in the physical world. After all, that is what we know, that is what makes “sense”, and “fits in” with what our understanding is of how things work. There is logic in that way of life; things make sense when we look at life through the lens of this world. We live our lives like everyone around us and follow the norms that are expected of us. As a result, when we see events or people bucking those norms, those rules of normality all around us, our natural response is to resist that challenge to what we consider “normal,” or “right.”

But what if that aberration is being blown in by the Spirit? What if the Spirit is trying to blow us towards that exception, instead of giving in to our natural response to avoid or shun what is different? The news is full of people and events that we need to shun, things that challenge our worldly sense of what is “normal.” Things like illegal immigrants, people of color protesting in unpopular ways, Muslims, people living very different lifestyles and identities, to name a few, are things that we are inclined to avoid. Yet at the same time we have things like racial biases, never-ending war, gun violence and school shootings, oppression of whole groups of people, that we are told to accept as normal.

Where do you think the Spirit is in all of this? When immigrant children are intentionally separated from their parents the minute they get to the border to claim asylum? When our only concern when people protest systemic racism is the honor of the symbol of the country that allows the racism to continue, or the semantics of stressing the importance of Black lives? I guess it boils down to the relationship we seek with Jesus and the Almighty. Do we act like Nicodemus, seeking Jesus when the light of day fades, when nobody else will see us?

As a respected member of his community, at night he could have a relationship with Jesus without having to make any real changes. He could talk to Jesus at night and quietly make a decision in his heart to believe in Jesus; that way it wouldn't disrupt his comfortable and established life. However, through water and spirit we are adopted by the Spirit into this holy family. We are made heirs with Christ, but we also share in his suffering. Not just the suffering of carrying our own crosses, but the suffering of testifying and living a life that is

often at odds with the ways of the world; the world of the flesh that is usually at odds with the world of the Spirit. There is no way to follow Jesus without him interfering with your life. Following Jesus entails cost. When the Spirit blows truth and conviction in your direction, how do you respond?

There's a story of a couple looking at buying a new home in tornado country in the Midwest. As they toured a potential house, they discovered a "safe room," or more accurately, a "safe closet." A closet, which served as a coat closet near the front door, was built with steel walls and a steel door in addition to the wooden one. The purpose was that in case of a sudden tornado you could run and squeeze in and protect yourself from the effects of the wind.

How many of us have spiritual "safe rooms," places where we can retreat to our same old arguments, or beliefs or attitudes when the Spirit blows truth and conviction our direction, or tries to blow us into the fray when truth is being denied? The walls and door of such a closet are often made of ridicule or criticism, and those doors can slam shut almost automatically.

We all have a choice: to be the nice obedient children of the flesh, children who follow the world's norms and rules, in our windless safe rooms, or to be the wild children of the Spirit, blown to and fro in the direction of God's truth and justice. I pray we always seek the windy way. Amen.

Call to Serve.

God is the Giver of life, Christ is the Gift sent to share our life, and the Holy Spirit the power that enables us to continue in generosity, justice and joy. Let us open our hearts and our lives to God and one another.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. **Today, as we listen to the following interlude, let's reflect on how we can be more attentive to the leadings of God's Spirit in the coming weeks, in our individual lives, and as a community of faith.**

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [Video]

You Are Salt for the Earth

music by Marty Haugen,
played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/EjEBOMMPWQ0>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Holy One, you have given yourself to us in Creator, in Christ, in the Spirit. We now give back to you: this money that seems so little; this worship that seems so small; these words that never quite get it right. Receive what we offer and transform it by the power of your Spirit into: enough money, sufficient praise, worthy words for proclaiming and enacting your peace, justice, and love in the world.

Blessing/Assurance

Though God is far beyond what we can comprehend or imagine, God knows us. God knows you. And God has chosen you to be part of this world and you have an important part to play. Without you, it cannot be done. You are needed and very much loved. Turn to God's ways, and seek God's wisdom and insight in your daily life, through prayer, reading of Scripture, spending time in nature, or however else you connect with the Divine. God loves you, and desires you to know them. Go and share the good news of God's love, wonder, and awe.

Postlude

Two Fishermen

music by Suzanne Toolen,
performed by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/I5HcD6E0tMU>