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Rev. Christine T. Bohn, Ph.D.
Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church, Greeneville, TN
All Scripture quotations are NIV, unless otherwise indicated.

Acts 2:1-21
The Spirit Blowing

Have you ever noticed that somewhere along the line, just about every little kid goes through a period when every other word out of their mouth is why? Why is the sky blue? Why is it dark at night? Why do dogs like to sniff? Why are Uncle Harry and Aunt Lucy getting a divorce?

Have you ever noticed that, even when you know the answer to the question, you don't always give a complete answer—not right away? Sometimes the question comes before the child is ready to hear the answer—at least the full answer. Maybe you have thought about all the things you wanted that child to know—about the world, about people, about the family, about herself, but you couldn't say much, not yet, because it wasn't the right time.

What about all the wisdom your parents shared with you when you were a child? Some of it didn't sink in then, but sometime later it finally started making sense.

There are probably even things you understand about yourself and about the world around you now that made no sense at all 10 years ago. We can't take everything in all at once. Some things just have to wait until the right time.

On the last night of his earthly life, Jesus said to his disciples, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will declare to you the things that are to come." (John 16:12-13)

In your walk with Christ, have you ever wondered why sometimes it takes so long to experience the healing that he promises? One of the reasons is that healing involves truth-telling, and truth-telling can be painful. The Spirit will guide us into the full truth of our brokenness as we are able to bear it. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free (John 8:32).

Have you ever wondered why sometimes it takes so long even to recognize the snares of the devil that have us trapped in wrong-doing and

wrong-thinking? One of the reasons is that Satan is the father of lies, and we do not learn to see through his lies all at once. The Spirit will guide us into the full truth of our choices little by little. When the Spirit comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

Have you ever wondered why sometimes it takes so long to repent even when we want to? One of the reasons is that repentance involves truth-telling, and self-deceit can be tempting, and we do not see ourselves as we really are all at once. The Spirit will guide us into the full truth of our sinfulness one layer at a time. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sin, God who is faithful and just will forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).

Have you ever wondered why sometimes it takes so long to align our lives with God's purposes? One of the reasons is that discipleship involves trusting that his purposes are better than our own and that his promises are true, and we do not learn to trust all at once. The Spirit will guide us into the truth of God's sovereignty and faithfulness one step of obedience at a time. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures (James 1:18).

Have you ever wondered why sometimes it takes so long to grow in wisdom? One of the reasons is that the wisdom of Christ appears as foolishness according to the measures of the world. The Spirit will guide us into the full truth of the wisdom of Christ as we are able to bear it. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength (1 Corinthians 1:25).

Have you ever wondered how it is that Peter became a courageous proclaimer of the gospel and Paul became a missionary to the gentiles?

Remember Peter? He was brash and quick-tempered. He was a simple fisherman, not particularly well-educated and entirely ordinary. He was the one who publicly denied Jesus three times only hours after asserting that he would be loyal even unto death.

Then, in Acts, Peter becomes the unshakable leader of the community of believers. He is the first one to proclaim the gospel publicly. He is a powerful speaker. He is courageous. He is unashamed.

Remember Paul? He was a Pharisee among Pharisees. He was a zealous persecutor of the church because he was confident that the church was leading people astray.

Then, in Acts, Paul becomes a powerful witness for Christ. He becomes convinced that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He sets out on a mission to the gentiles. He is zealous for Christ. He is zealous for people who need Christ. He is unashamed.

What happened? How can the dramatic transformations of these two men be explained?

Well, I don't know if they can be explained, as such. But their transformations can be traced, and the trail leads directly to Pentecost. Jesus also said to his disciples—the Eleven and all the rest of us who have ever followed or ever will follow—“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Since Jesus' death, the followers of Jesus had been laying low in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. Even after Jesus' resurrection, they kept to themselves, waiting and praying and wondering what God would do next. After Jesus' ascension, they gathered together in the upper room of the house in Jerusalem, still waiting, still praying, still wondering what God would do next.

And then the day of Pentecost came. Luke describes it this way: “Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Suddenly, the house was too small to keep in such overwhelming power. The followers of Jesus spilled out into the courtyard and into the street. They began to proclaim the mighty works of God, not simply in Aramaic spoken with a Galilean accent, but in languages they did not know, languages from many different parts of the Roman empire. By the power of the Holy Spirit, everyone within shouting distance heard the mighty works of God being proclaimed in their own languages!

The Holy Spirit swept in, and suddenly the followers of Jesus moved from huddling together, just their little group, to the streets of their city, no longer able to keep the good news of Jesus to themselves.

The Holy Spirit blew into their midst and swept the followers of Jesus out into the world on that first Day of Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection, but it was not limited to that day. This is the same Spirit that empowers every follower of Jesus to come to faith in the first place, to grow in that faith, and to respond to that faith without shame. When you see a local church where the light of Jesus shines strong beyond the walls, you can be sure that this same Spirit is the power source for that light.

The miracle of that first Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection is still happening. The Spirit is still coming. The living Christ still makes his presence and power known.

In ways that we cannot predict or control—in ways that we can only be open to...or not--the Holy Spirit rushes into the lives of his people...shaking us out of our complacency, shaking us out of our fear, shaking us out of our inward focus, shaking us out of our limited expectations, shaking us out of our pews and into the streets...and into our neighborhoods...and into our schools...and into our extended families...where we can share the love of Jesus Christ with people who desperately need him but will never come to him unless we bring his grace and truth to them.

How is the Spirit blowing in this community of Jesus followers today? What is Timber Ridge doing that we could not do apart from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit? When we are doing only what we can do in our own power, people see good people doing the best they can. But when the church is doing things that we could not do apart from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, then people see Jesus.

How are people seeing Jesus in your life and in my life? What are we doing that we could not do apart from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us? When we are doing only what we can do in our own power, people see good people doing the best they can. When we are doing things that we could not do apart from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, then people see Jesus.

The Spirit is blowing in this community today. He is here. He is calling. He is equipping. He is sending. That's what he does. May we be blown wherever and however he wants, for the glory of God.

Amen.