

# Swaying in the Spirit

## Pentecost Sunday

*John 20:22*  
*College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa*

*Rev. Gordon Edwards, Guest Pastor*  
*May 24, 2015*

### INTRODUCTION

"OKLAHOMA – where the wind comes sweeping down the plains. "

We know something about the wind living here from the violent winds of tornadoes to the cooling breezes of a summer evening and everything in between. So, today as we observe Pentecost – coming of the Holy Spirit upon the first believers, and hopefully on current believers gathered here today – we must consider how and when we feel the Spirit blowing in our lives – within us and around us. Our lessons today are descriptive of the Spirit as it relates to us.

### SPIRIT = AN EDUCATOR

Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit will lead us into all truth. The Spirit leads us into the activity of God in the midst of the world. The Spirit does not give disciples the ability to foresee the future; the Spirit does enable us to see how God is active in the present.

The coming of the Spirit is horizontal transcendence. The Spirit comes to the gathered disciples for as we are together in the Spirit we are able to discern better how God is at work in the redemption of the world. We are called to be meaning-makers, dreamers, interpreters. We recall what Jesus has told us and are willing to move into greater ministries than what he was able to accomplish as an individual. Rediscovery of the sacred in the secular for the world is charged with the grandeur of God.

So, for us today, we are called to share the Spirit with one another in order that we may discern God's presence and work in the world. We are called to grow in our recollection of what Jesus has told us and be free to move into the truth of God's redeeming grace and love for all humanity.

### SPIRIT = A LINGUIST

God does not speak "Christianese." Pentecost broke out of an exclusive language and declared the mighty acts of God in every language and into every culture of the known world. God spoke outside the walls of Temple religiosity, outside of the halls of political power, outside the bounds of respectability and the status quo. God is not exclusively for "the church."

The coming of the Spirit challenges us any time we or our society tries to divide the world into "them" and "us." When we do this, our hearts are hardened to the compassion of God. Yet so often the powerful will attempt to enforce sameness, exclusivity, unity by removing the language and culture of others trying to silence and delegitimize people of color who speak out against police brutality, mass incarceration and oppression.

The Spirit's coming calls us to be linguists listening to our sisters and brothers who come to be among us. The Spirit's coming calls us to live in respect of the diversity of God's human family. Pentecost is rooted in the mission given to Abraham and Sarah: become a blessing to all nations and peoples.

#### SPIRIT = ADVOCATE/AGITATOR

Jesus told the disciples: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." I understand this to mean to love the world, not condemn it; to confront the sin of the world, the evil of the oppressors, the destruction of power and might. We live in a culture in which power seems to rule, in which the military seems to be the default answer, in which arrogance seems to dominate discussion, in which disrespect has displaced civility. This is from our government to our work places to our communities. God does not silence voices, rather empowers the voices of the marginalized and the oppressed.

Jesus refused to participate in the emperor cult of his day; he refused to worship the legalism of the Temple leaders. Jesus was persecuted not because he was religious; rather, Jesus was persecuted because he was treasonous.

The Spirit's coming challenges us into this same truth, challenges us when we become nationalistic to the exclusion of others, when we are complicit in the subtle racism that persists in us and our culture. Example: I have not considered myself racist, though was confronted recently with that fact. In reading Michelle Alexander's The New Jim Crow (which I strongly encourage you to read), I found myself talking to myself, "I wonder if she is African American. I need to find out." After wrestling with this for a few days, I finally had to acknowledge my racism. Was I trying to discount her work so I could feel better rather than let her speak to me of her study? Racism, like air pollution, is a reality that we breathe in us unknowingly. The Spirit is needed to cleanse us and lead us into all truth of God's love for the world.

#### CONCLUSION

So, as we boisterously sing, "Oklahoma where the wind comes sweeping down the plain," let this become a prayer for the Spirit to move in and among us that we may become more faithful instruments of God being educators, linguists, advocates and agitators for truth. Amen.

B. Gordon Edwards

*The text above reflects pastor's notes and not a manuscript.*